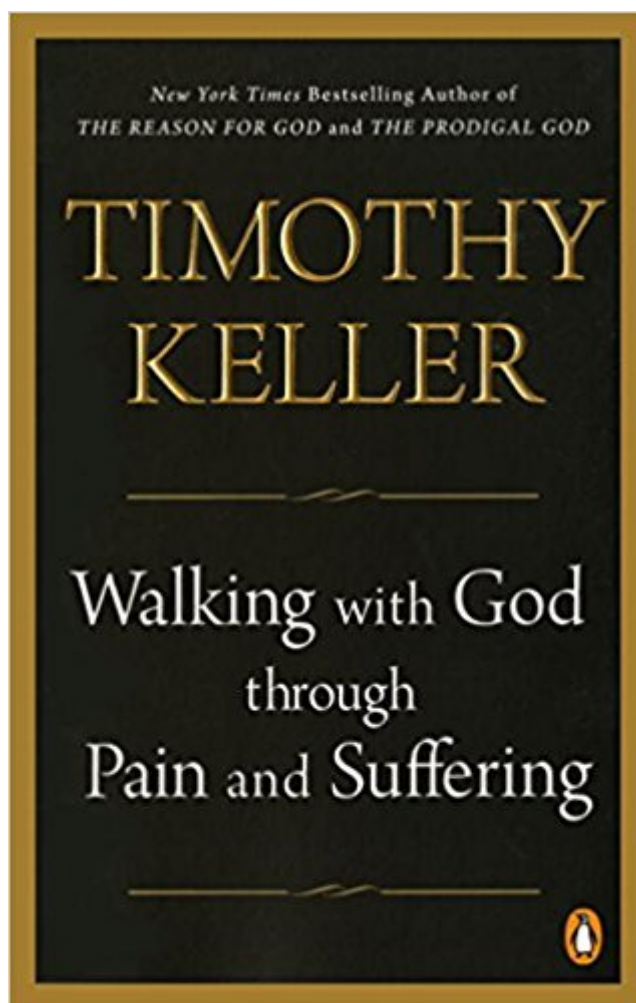


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Walking With God Through Pain And Suffering



Synopsis

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of the forthcoming *God's Wisdom for Navigating Life* Timothy Keller comes the definitive Christian book on why bad things happen and how we should respond to them. The question of why God would allow pain and suffering in the world has vexed believers and nonbelievers for millennia. Timothy Keller, whose books have sold millions of copies to both religious and secular readers, takes on this enduring issue and shows that there is meaning and reason behind our pain and suffering, making a forceful and ground-breaking case that this essential part of the human experience can be overcome only by understanding our relationship with God. As the pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, Timothy Keller is known for his unique insights into religion and culture. Keller's series of books has guided countless readers in their spiritual journeys. *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* uses biblical wisdom and personal stories of overcoming adversity to bring a much-needed, fresh viewpoint to this important issue.

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Customer Reviews

As Keller notes, no one is immune to pain and suffering. No matter how hard we work to remain healthy and maintain strong relationships with family and friends and at work, "something will inevitably ruin it," he writes. "Human life is fatally fragile and subject to forces beyond our power to manage. To avoid falling into despair, we need spiritual support. After all, the great theme of the Bible is how God brings joy through suffering. This insightful book offers hard-earned advice on how to accept and ultimately transcend the pain. First, Keller examines

human suffering through the ages and the ways that different cultures and religions have coped. Next, he discusses what the Bible says about suffering. Finally, he offers practical advice on how to live through it. He discusses the problem of evil, the reasons for suffering, the varieties of suffering, and the necessity of hope. A luminous and ultimately hopeful examination of the many aspects of suffering. --June Sawyers --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Praise for *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering* "It has something for everyone—something for the agnostic (Keller makes a strong argument that there are no true atheists); something for the philosopher (although he invites the wounded reader to skip that section); and something for the believer being beckoned into the inner sanctum of sharing in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (a place no one naturally wants to go). - The Gospel Coalition "It is a resource that takes a multidimensional approach to suffering - tackling the internal and external realities - and takes us deep theologically and practically." - Vertical Living Ministries "A luminous and ultimately hopeful examination of the many aspects of suffering." - Booklist Praise for Timothy Keller and his other books "Tim Keller's ministry in New York City is leading a generation of seekers and skeptics toward belief in God. I thank God for him." - Billy Graham "Unlike most suburban megachurches, much of Redeemer is remarkably traditional. What is not traditional is Dr. Keller's skill in speaking the language of his urbane audience. Observing Dr. Keller's professorial pose on stage, it is easy to understand his appeal." - The New York Times "Fifty years from now, if evangelical Christians are widely known for their love of cities, their commitment to mercy and justice, and their love of their neighbors, Tim Keller will be remembered as a pioneer of the new urban Christians." - Christianity Today "With intellectual, brimstone-free sermons that manage to cite Woody Allen alongside Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Keller draws some 5,000 young followers every Sunday. Church leaders see him as a model of how to evangelize urban centers across the country, and Keller has helped 50 gospel-based Christian churches around New York plus another 50 from San Francisco to London." - New York Magazine "This is the book I give to all my friends who are serious spiritual seekers or skeptics." - Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, on *The Reason for God* "Keller mines material from literary classics, philosophy, anthropology and a multitude of other disciplines to make an intellectually compelling case for God. Written for skeptics and the believers who love them, the book draws on the author's encounters as founding pastor of New York's booming Redeemer

Presbyterian Church [The Reason for God] should serve both as testimony to the author's encyclopedic learning and as a compelling overview of the current debate on faith for those who doubt and for those who want to reevaluate what they believe, and why.

Publishers Weekly on *The Reason for God*: "World has briefly reviewed about 200 books over the past year. Many stand out, but one in particular is likely to change many lives and ways of thinking. World's Book of the Year is Tim Keller's *The Reason for God*.

Marvin Olasky on *The Reason for God*: "It's a great resource to equip you to speak with your secular friends; to show them why the Christian understanding of marriage is not only a tremendous blessing, it's the only one that works.

ChristianPost.com on *The Meaning of Marriage*: "The Meaning of Marriage is incredibly rich with wisdom and insight that will leave the reader, whether single or married, feeling uplifted. While the book is filled with expertly selected biblical verses, nonreligious readers willing to accept these observations may find answers not only to the meaning of marriage but to that even bigger question—the meaning of life itself.

The Washington Times on *The Meaning of Marriage*: "Theologically rich and philosophically informed, yet accessible and filled with practical wisdom.

Comment Magazine on *Every Good Endeavor*: "This book is for us all and through its reading it can change and reshape your entire outlook on your life.

Sarah Macintosh on *Every Good Endeavor*: From the Hardcover edition.

As someone who has experienced a tremendous amount of loss, grief, pain, and suffering I was excited for Tim's book on suffering to arrive. Tim Keller has also suffered much, and thus speaks with credibility as a fellow sufferer in the journey of life where there are many hills and valleys along the way. Keller divides the book into three parts based on the biblical metaphor where suffering is described as a "fiery furnace." Fire is an image used throughout the Bible as an image describing the torment and pain of suffering. The Bible speaks frequently of troubles and trials as "walking through the fire," a "fiery ordeal", and a "fiery furnace." Therefore, Keller builds his themes around this image. In Part One Keller considers the furnace from the outside of us. He tackles "the phenomenon of human suffering, as well as the various ways that different cultures, religions, and eras in history have sought to help people face and get through it [suffering]." In part two Keller moves away from the theoretical realm and begins to hone in on the personal and character issues that are developed when we suffer. He seeks to demonstrate that the common ways we handle suffering via avoidance, denial, and despair are essentially to waste our suffering. On the other

hand, the Bible presents a balanced view in how to handle suffering in a step by step fashion. Biblical truth is always balanced and faces hardships head-on because these are the fires that God uses in our lives to mold our character and make us more like Christ. Part three is the most practical part of the book. Suffering is actually designed by God to "refine us, not destroy us." Keller explains in this final section how we can properly orient ourselves toward God in the midst of our suffering so that we walk as Jesus walked in His great suffering. The best time to read a book on suffering is before you are in the midst of the furnace. Keller recommends that you read sections two and three if you are already in the midst of great suffering. However, the best time to prepare for suffering is before it occurs. Therefore, it would be wise to read this book in the calm before the storm. Christians need to be prepared and develop a theological foundation of suffering before we enter the hot furnaces of life. Americans seem to suffer more due to the fact that they are even suffering - than because of the suffering in and of itself. Keller wisely shows that suffering is a normal part of living in a fallen world. Life is full of various kinds of sufferings and we will always find ourselves coming into, or coming out of the fires of the furnace. God's promise is that when you "pass through the waters...when you walk through the fire...I will be with you." Jesus faced the ultimate suffering and furnace [the cross] and came through unscathed on our behalf. He was victorious over all the fires that we faced so that we too can be victorious as we face the fires that will come in Him, and with Him by our side. I highly recommend this book as a wonderful resource that takes seriously the problems and complexities of suffering without watering them down. It is a resource that takes a multidimensional approach to suffering - tackling the internal and external realities - and takes us deep theologically and practically. It is good spiritual food for the mind and soul. Keller also weaves many personal stories of men and women along the way in this journey of suffering that will help you connect to the truths that he is communicating - not just for information, but for transformation. I believe that God will use this book to powerfully help Christians realize that God has a plan and purpose to bring good out of all of our suffering. Out of each furnace that we enter - though difficult and painful - we will be refined by the fire and come out like gold. We will come out shining like the Son if we learn to trust and depend on His grace before, during, and in the aftermath of our trials. As Keller writes, "In Jesus Christ we see that God actually experiences the pain of the fire as we do. He is truly God with us, in love and understanding, in our anguish. He plunged himself into our furnace so that, when we find ourselves in the fire, we can turn to him and know we will not be consumed but will be made into people great and beautiful."

One of the books I read for our series at Revolution on Habakkuk called Waiting on God

(<http://www.tucsonrevolution.com/waiting-on-god/>) was Tim Keller's book, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*. It is by far the most helpful and most thorough book on the topic of pain and suffering and where God is when life hurts the most. To give you an idea, when I read a book I would say I average highlighting anywhere from 25 to 40 things. In this book, I highlighted 160 passages. Keller starts off the book by telling us why it matters so much, "Suffering is everywhere, unavoidable, and its scope often overwhelms. If you spend one hour reading this book, more than five children throughout the world will have died from abuse and violence during that time.³ If you give the entire day to reading, more than one hundred children will have died violently. But this is, of course, only one of innumerable forms and modes of suffering. Thousands die from traffic accidents or cancer every hour, and hundreds of thousands learn that their loved ones are suddenly gone. That is comparable to the population of a small city being swept away every day, leaving families and friends devastated in the wake. When enormous numbers of deaths happen in one massive event—such as the 1970 Bhola cyclone in Bangladesh, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, or the 2010 Haiti earthquake—each of which killed 300,000 or more at once—it makes headlines around the world and everyone reels from the devastation. But statistics are misleading. Such historic disasters do not really change the suffering rate. Tens of thousands of people die every day in unexpected tragedies, and hundreds of thousands around them are crushed by grief and shock. The majority of them trigger no headlines because pain and misery is the norm in this world. We are always looking to make some sort of sense out of murder in order to keep it safely at bay: I do not fit the description; I do not live in that town; I would never have gone to that place, known that person. But what happens when there is no description, no place, nobody? Where do we go to find our peace of mind? . . . The fact is, staving off our own death is one of our favorite national pastimes. Whether it's exercise, checking our cholesterol or having a mammogram, we are always hedging against mortality. Find out what the profile is, and identify the ways in which you do not fit it. No amount of money, power, and planning can prevent bereavement, dire illness, relationship betrayal, financial disaster, or a host of other troubles from entering your life. Human life is fatally fragile and subject to forces beyond our power to manage. Life is tragic." With that in mind, here 13 things I learned or was reminded of in this book that I hope will be of encouragement for you: When pain and suffering come upon us, we finally see not only that we are not in control of our lives but that we never were. At the heart of why people disbelieve and believe in God, of why people decline and grow in character, of how God becomes less real and more real to us is suffering. The great theme of the Bible itself is how God brings fullness of joy not just despite but

through suffering, just as Jesus saved us not in spite of but because of what he endured on the cross. The central image of suffering as a fiery furnace. This biblical metaphor is a rich one. Fire is, of course, a well-known image for torment and pain. The Bible calls trials and troubles "walking through fire" (Isa 43:2) or a "fiery ordeal" (1 Pet 4:12). But it also likens suffering to a fiery furnace (1 Pet 1:6-7). The biblical understanding of a furnace is more what we would call a "forge." Anything with that degree of heat is, of course, a very dangerous and powerful thing. However, if used properly, it does not destroy. Things put into the furnace properly can be shaped, refined, purified, and even beautified. This is a remarkable view of suffering, that if faced and endured with faith, it can in the end only make us better, stronger, and more filled with greatness and joy. Suffering, then, actually can use evil against itself. It can thwart the destructive purposes of evil and bring light and life out of darkness and death. Nothing is more important than to learn how to maintain a life of purpose in the midst of painful adversity. Christians don't face adversity by stoically decreasing our love for the people and things of this world so much as by increasing our love and joy in God. Suffering is actually at the heart of the Christian story. Suffering is the result of our turn away from God, and therefore it was the way through which God himself in Jesus Christ came and rescued us for himself. And now it is how we suffer that comprises one of the main ways we become great and Christ-like, holy and happy, and a crucial way we show the world the love and glory of our Savior. If you have a God infinite and powerful enough for you to be angry at for allowing evil, then you must at the same time have a God infinite enough to have sufficient reasons for allowing that evil. God is sovereign over suffering and yet, in teaching unique to the Christian faith among the major religions, God also made himself vulnerable and subject to suffering. The other side of the sovereignty of God is the suffering of God himself. Suffering is painful "at the time" but later yields a harvest. It is one thing to believe in God but it is quite another thing to trust God. If you believe in Jesus and you rest in him, then suffering will relate to your character like fire relates to gold. We should not assume that if we are trusting in God we won't weep, or feel anger, or feel hopeless. The way you live now is completely controlled by what you believe about your future. If you are walking through a difficult season or are struggling to trust God as you look at the pain in our world, this is the one book I'd recommend you read.

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