

WHY DOES GOD LET BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

I remember asking that as I sifted through ashes for remains at Ground Zero on 9/11. The sheer magnitude of destruction shook me to the core. Every shattered piece of the Twin Towers and thousands of us first responders were covered in gray soot. And we knew that its foul stench included remains of family and friends

No one said much. I went from crying, to praying, to a gloomy mental depression. As my hands lifted and pulled, I sadly contemplated similar incidents of misery. In one way or another, tragedy affects everyone. The particulars are different, but agony rips us all apart.

When I was young, belief in God was easy. He protected us and seemed to answer our prayers. But at Ground Zero childhood comforts seemed like fairy tales. How could a loving God let this happen? How can we believe in good when everything around us is so ugly?

13th Century Sufi mystic Rumi once wrote, "Suffering is a gift. In it is hidden mercy."

That was on a card given to me by someone who meant well. Similar consolations were offered by family and friends. When the wounds were fresh, optimism seemed naïve. But after several years, I noticed that words of hope withstood the test of time. The notion that a loving God has His healing hands on the pulse of our diseased world managed to sustain me.

It wasn't easy to maintain a positive outlook. But to view life as restricted to this material world didn't allow my deepest sores to heal. If our inner being, spirit, or whatever we choose to call it is eternal, the tragedies of this world can be accepted as temporary. The emotional pain will always be there, but our severe torture can at least be cushioned with some hope.

We or our loved ones may succumb to addictions, illnesses, death, financial woes, etc. But if there is a God, we'll eventually learn and grow from pain. Frankly, we or our loved ones might fail life's tests and have to wait to realize their benefits in a future realm. But I trust we will all profit from these agonizing struggles if not in this world, at least in the next. Maybe God has to turn up the heat to cook the soup.

After throwing my hands up in complete surrender, I was only left with this hope that there is Divine wisdom to our hardships and grief. I try my best to accept the bad with the good and to trust in God's hidden purpose. It worked for me and I know it can for you too.

Please see References