



## Resiliency Exercise: *Purposes of Suffering*

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Have you ever wondered why God allows his own children to suffer? For example:

- *Peter has been diagnosed with cancer and must leave the field.*
- *Sally has come under such criticism from her teammates that she can barely go on.*

In this fallen world in which we live and labor, suffering is expected. Perhaps especially for those in ministry. (2 Tim 1:11,12) It happens. Whether cancer or criticism, we cannot help but wonder about the purpose of suffering. Can anything good come of it?

*How are you suffering? Or, how have you suffered?*

Read the following **Biblical Images of Suffering** with their scriptures. Use the space provided to describe how each image resonates with particular suffering that you have experienced.

**PAIN IN CHILD BIRTH** *"The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth... not only so, but we ourselves groan inwardly as we await our adoption as sons." (Romans 8:22-23)*



**REFINED GOLD** *"For a little while you have had to suffer all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire- may be proved genuine and result in praise." (1 Peter 1: 6-7)*



*"When he has tested me I will come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)*

**BEARING UP UNDER A LOAD (TO PERSEVERE)** *"Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance." (James 1:2-3)*



*"We know that suffering produces perseverance." (Romans 5:3)*



**A BRANCH'S PRUNING** *"I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it may be even more fruitful."* (John 15:1-2)



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**A FATHER'S TRAINING** *"The Lord disciplines those he loves, and punished everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined... then you are illegitimate children and not true sons."* (Hebrews 12:6-8)



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**A SOLDIER'S ENDURANCE** *"Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ."* (2 Timothy 2:3)



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1. How do these images impact your understanding of suffering?
  2. Is there one that resonates with your experience most significantly? Explain how.



Read the following **Biblical Purposes for Suffering** and describe how each purpose may relate to your situation.

#### **TESTS & BUILDS OUR FAITH**

*"These (trials) have come that your faith may be proved genuine." (1 Peter 1:7)*

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#### **PURIFIES OUR HEARTS**

*"God disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness. ...(it) produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."  
(Hebrews 12: 10-11)*

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#### **DEVELOPS CHARACTER**

*"The testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete lacking in nothing." (James 1:3b-4)*

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#### **INCREASES OUR FRUITFULNESS**

*"Every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, so it will be even more fruitful." (John 15:2)*

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#### **GLORIFIES GOD**

*"This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."  
(John 11:4)*

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#### **CULTIVATES HOPE**

*"Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." (Romans 5:3-4)*

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Suffering

Perseverance

Character

Hope



3. Understanding the purposes of suffering does not always relieve the pain or answer all our questions. What help do these concepts bring?
4. How have you grown through suffering?

*Thank you for working through the Resiliency Exercise, **Purposes of Suffering**, addressing **Supportive Theology** for healthy resiliency. We hope that this has been beneficial to you. For more resiliency resources including other Resiliency Exercises write to [resiliencyprojectteam@worldteam.org](mailto:resiliencyprojectteam@worldteam.org).*

*We value your feedback. Please fill out the online survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WTresiliency>. Your feedback will help us make this, and other Resiliency Exercises, more effective.*

*Thank you!*

*World Team Resiliency Project Team*

