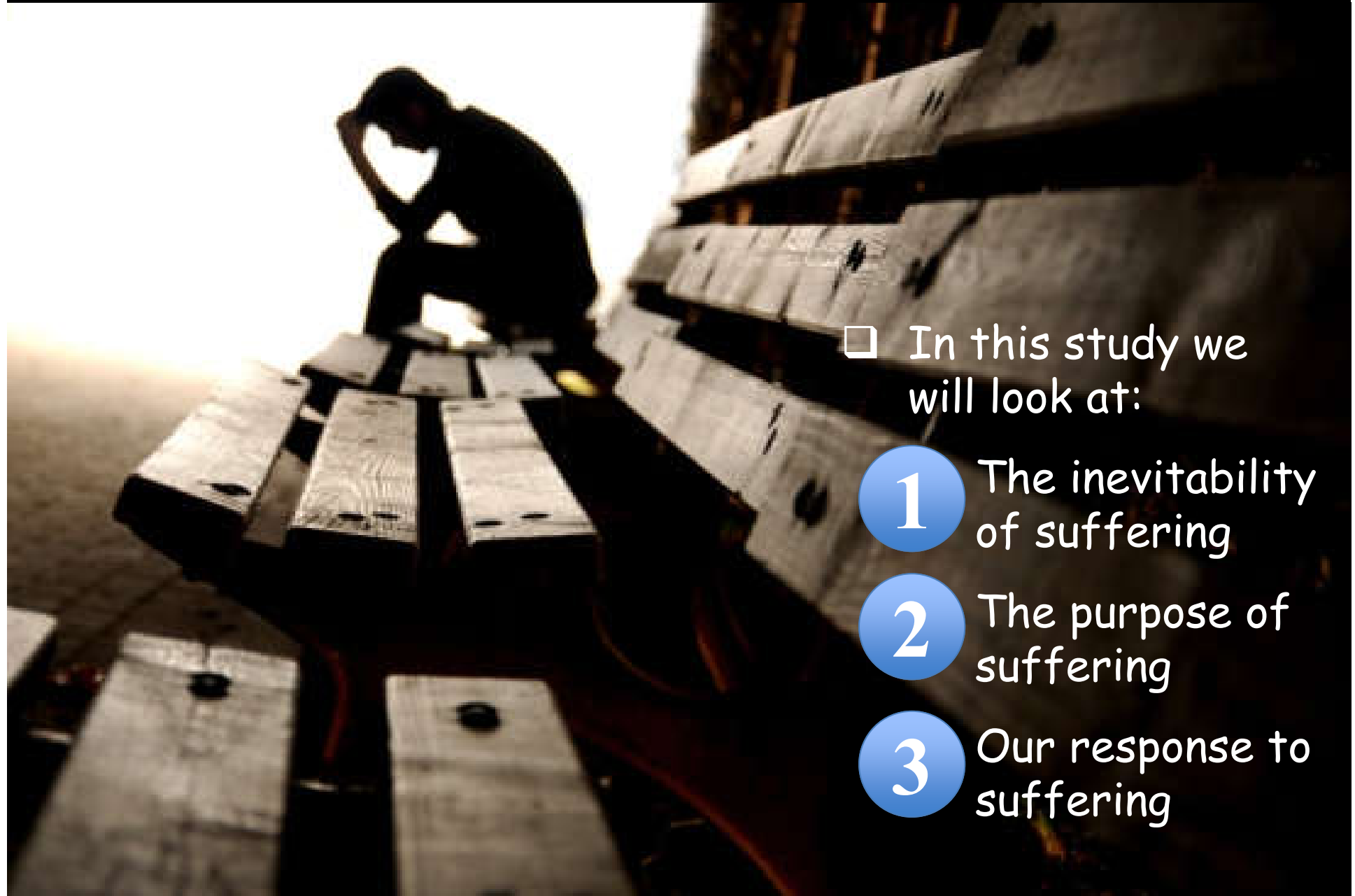


SUFFERING

- ❑ We saw last time that the Bible acknowledges the issue of suffering as part of the human condition.
- The book of Job, one of the longer books in the Bible, is dedicated solely to the question of suffering.
- Likewise the books of Jeremiah and Habakkuk have much to say about it.
- Much of 1 Peter and Hebrews is about the suffering and persecution of Christians.
- Many of Paul's letters were written from prison.
- About one third of the Psalms, the prayers of the OT, are cries that arise out of doubt, disappointment, or pain. ¹

¹ <http://www.christianity.co.nz/suffer8.htm>

SUFFERING



□ In this study we will look at:

- 1 The inevitability of suffering
- 2 The purpose of suffering
- 3 Our response to suffering

2a

THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING



CESSATION OF EXISTENCE

- ❑ Buddhism centres on the problem of suffering. The Four Noble Truths constitute the essence of Buddhism:
 1. Life is suffering - we are born in and live in suffering, and we die in suffering. Suffering is 'having what you wish you hadn't and not having what you wish you had'.
 2. Suffering is caused by desire. When there is a gap between desire and satisfaction, there is suffering.
 3. The way to end suffering is to end desire. The state where you have ended desire is Nirvana (extinction).
 4. The means to reach the end of 'ending desire' is the Noble Eightfold Path of 'ego-reduction,' a life-long task of 'desire-reduction' to reach Nirvana.¹

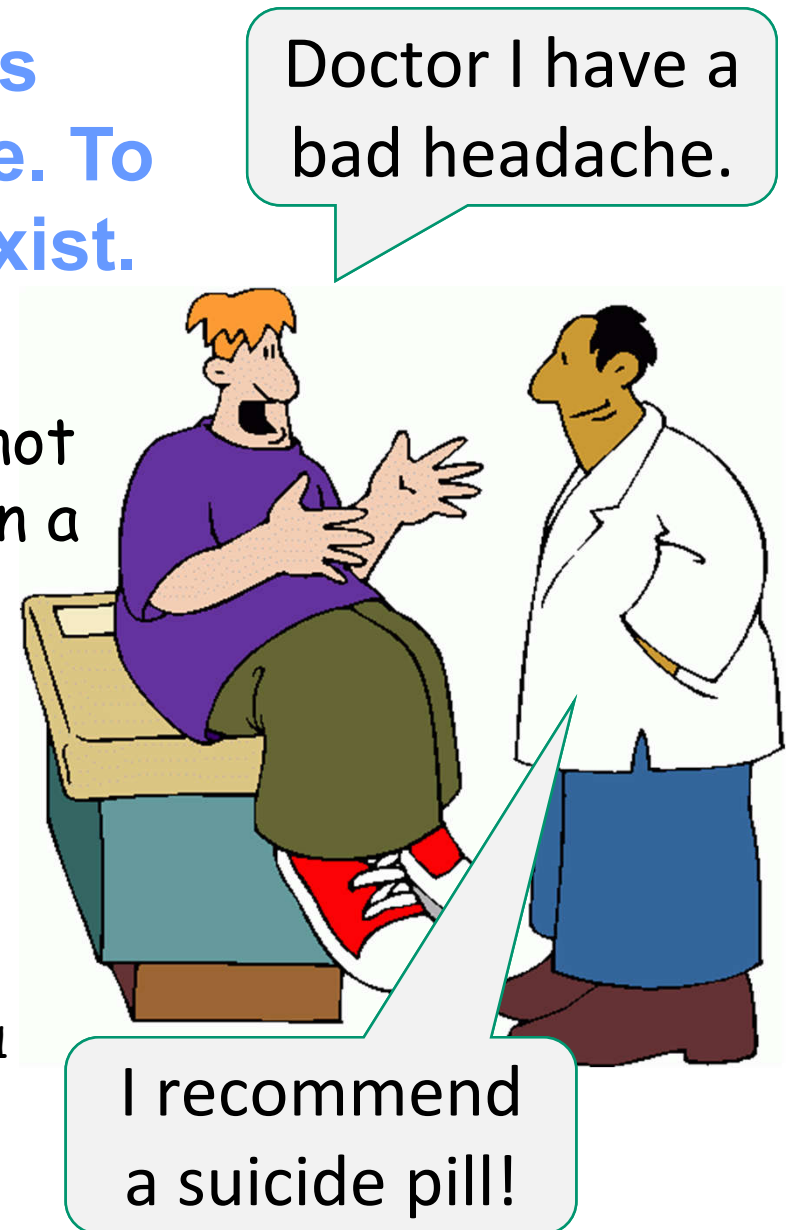
¹ http://www.mondithokas.com/docs/The_Problem_of_Evil_and_Suffering_A_Worldview_Analysis_4.doc by Rev. Sudhakar Mondithoka

CESSATION OF EXISTENCE

Buddhism sees suffering as inevitable and without purpose. To escape it, we must cease to exist.

- ❑ When we think critically, we will realize that Buddha's solution is not adequate and counter-intuitive. In a sense, it is not a solution at all. Nirvana is like spiritual euthanasia, **killing the patient (self or ego) to cure/get rid of the disease (selfishness or egotism) instead of curing the disease and saving the patient.**¹

¹Ibid



PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

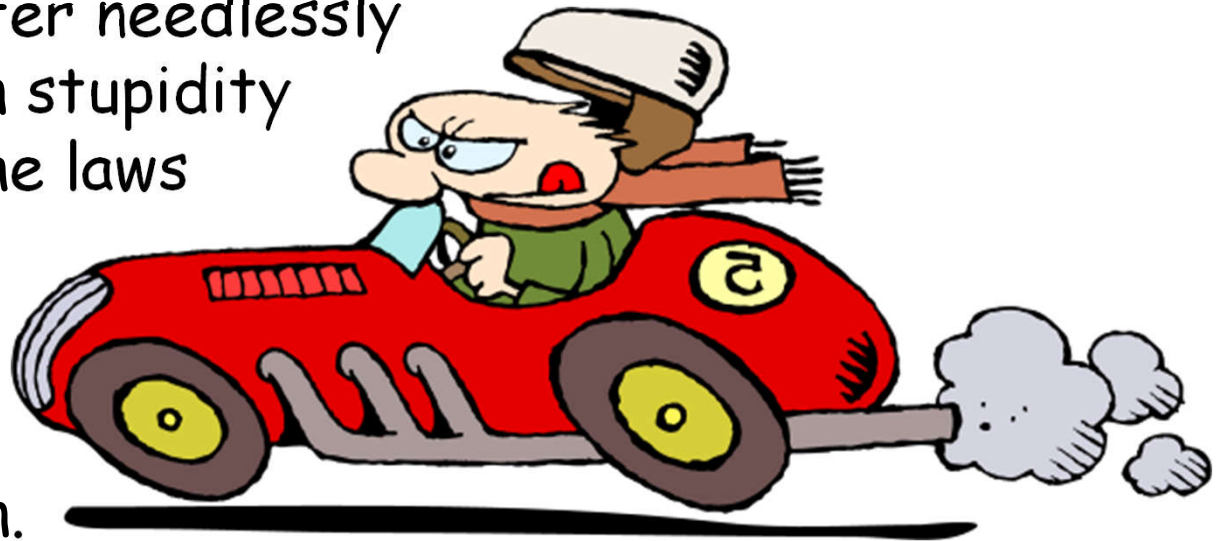
In contrast, Christianity sees suffering as inevitable, but as serving a divine purpose.

- 1) Firstly suffering is used by God as a form of discipline.
- 2) Sometimes suffering enables us to be used as a vessel for God's glory.
- 3) God speaks to us through suffering.
- 4) Suffering may be a test of our integrity.
- 5) Trials refine our faith.
- 6) God uses suffering to develop our character.

NEEDLESS SUFFERING

- ❑ Sometimes we suffer needlessly because of our own stupidity or disregard for the laws of the country.

- E.g. You get a ticket for a traffic violation.



- You assault someone and get yourself injured in the process.

NEEDLESS SUFFERING

- You steal or don't pay people what you owe them and then get prosecuted.



**You're not suffering for Christ –
you're suffering as a law-breaker.**

1 Pet 2:19-23 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?

NEEDLESS SUFFERING

- ❑ You are in unnecessary financial trouble because:
 - You buy things you don't need - with money you don't have - to keep up with people you don't like.



- When you get money, you don't clear debt or save anything - you use it all to buy something else you don't need.

NEEDLESS SUFFERING

- ☐ You don't have cash for groceries, yet you spent your last money on cigarettes or lotto tickets.
- ☐ You can't afford to go to the doctor, but you have satellite TV, Fibre internet and the latest iPhone.



- ☐ You're battling financially - because you try make "quick" money dishonestly.

➤ Prov 13:11
Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.



NEEDLESS SUFFERING

- ❑ You are sick because you abuse your body. E.g.
 - You develop lung problems because you smoke.
 - You have liver problems through alcohol abuse.



NEEDLESS SUFFERING



- You are ill because you don't eat healthily and never exercise.
- You suffer with diabetes and heart problems related to obesity and overeating.

You're not suffering for the gospel – you're suffering because of your bodily lusts and lack of self-control.

NEEDLESS SUFFERING

- ❑ You get pneumonia because you don't dress warmly in cold weather.
- ❑ You ignore advice and have to suffer the consequences of stupid decisions e.g. bad career choices, rocky relationships.



➤ Prov 12:15 (NLT)
Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others.



NEEDLESS SUFFERING

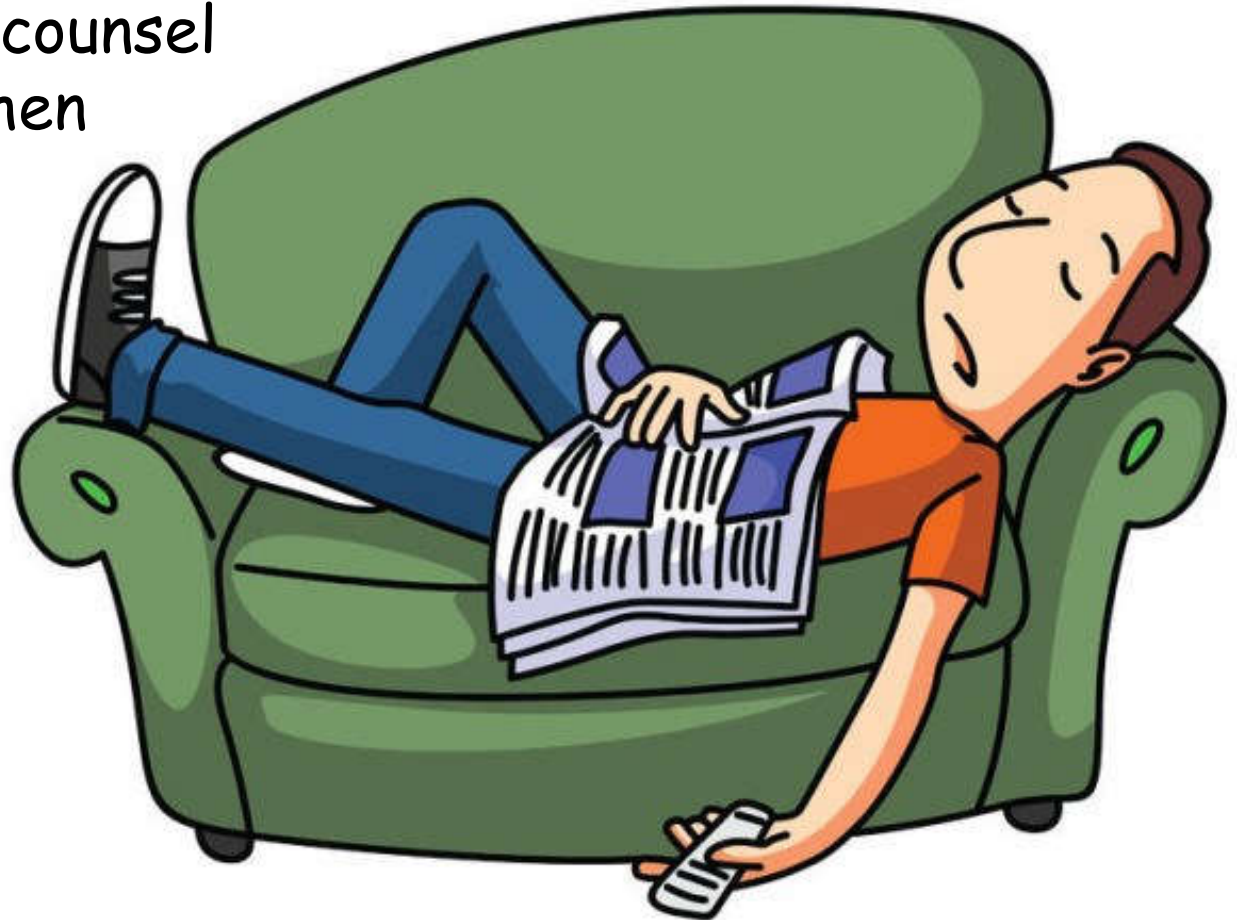
- ❑ You have stress related illness, depression or anxiety because you don't cast your burdens on Christ.



- 1 Pet 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

NEEDLESS SUFFERING

- ❑ You don't seek the counsel of God in prayer when you make major decisions.



- O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

NEEDLESS SUFFERING

- ❑ You are ignorant of God's Word so it has no influence on your decisions.
 - Hos 4:6 (NLT) My people are being destroyed because they don't know me... Since you have forgotten the laws of your God, I will forget to bless your children.
- ❑ Because of your wilful ignorance, you make choices which are contrary to the instruction of God's Word and run into trouble later on.

I DIDN'T KNOW!



SONS GET DISCIPLINE

But not all suffering is needless.

- 1) Suffering is used by God as a form of discipline.
 - Heb 12:7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons.
 - Deut 8:5 Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.



SONS GET DISCIPLINE

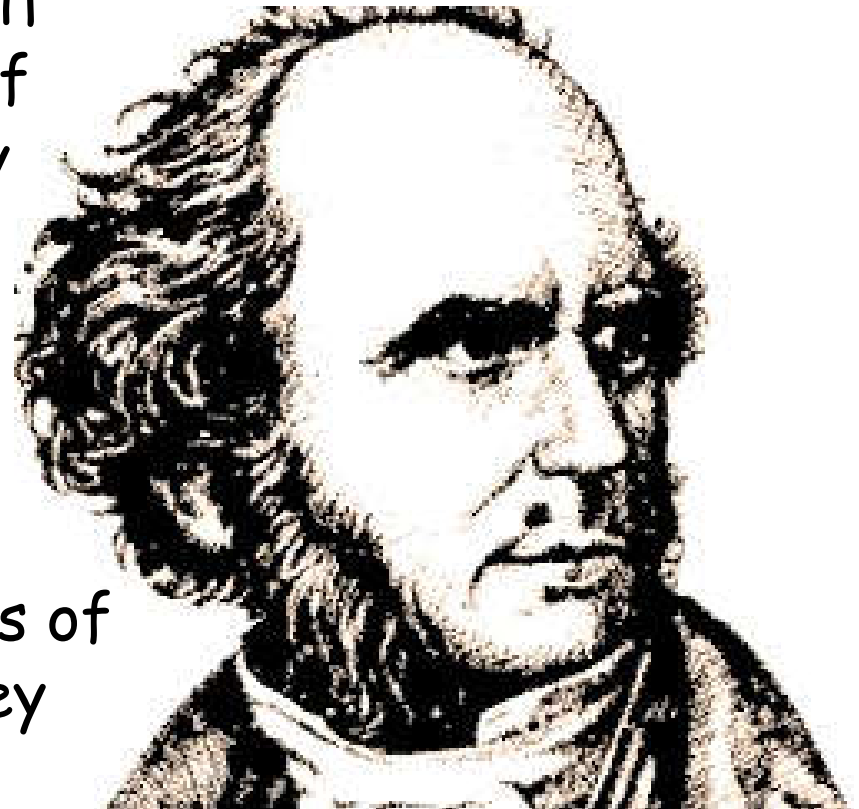
- ❑ We should welcome discipline because it is a sign of sonship.
- Heb 12:4-8 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes 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 (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.**

SONS GET DISCIPLINE

- ❑ Like all discipline, which is painful at the time, the end result is for our own good.
- Heb 12:9-11 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! **Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.** No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

SONS GET DISCIPLINE

- ❑ "God calls some of his children through long seasons of extremest **suffering**, obviously as a **means of purifying their hearts**; yet many pray for pure hearts and for the Spirit to purify their hearts, who would rebel at once if God should answer their prayers by means of such a course of providence. Or, God may see it necessary to crucify your love of reputation, and for this end may subject you to a course of trial which will blow your reputation to the winds of heaven. Are you ready to hail the blessings of a subdued, unselfish heart, even though it be given by means of such discipline?" ~ Charles Finney

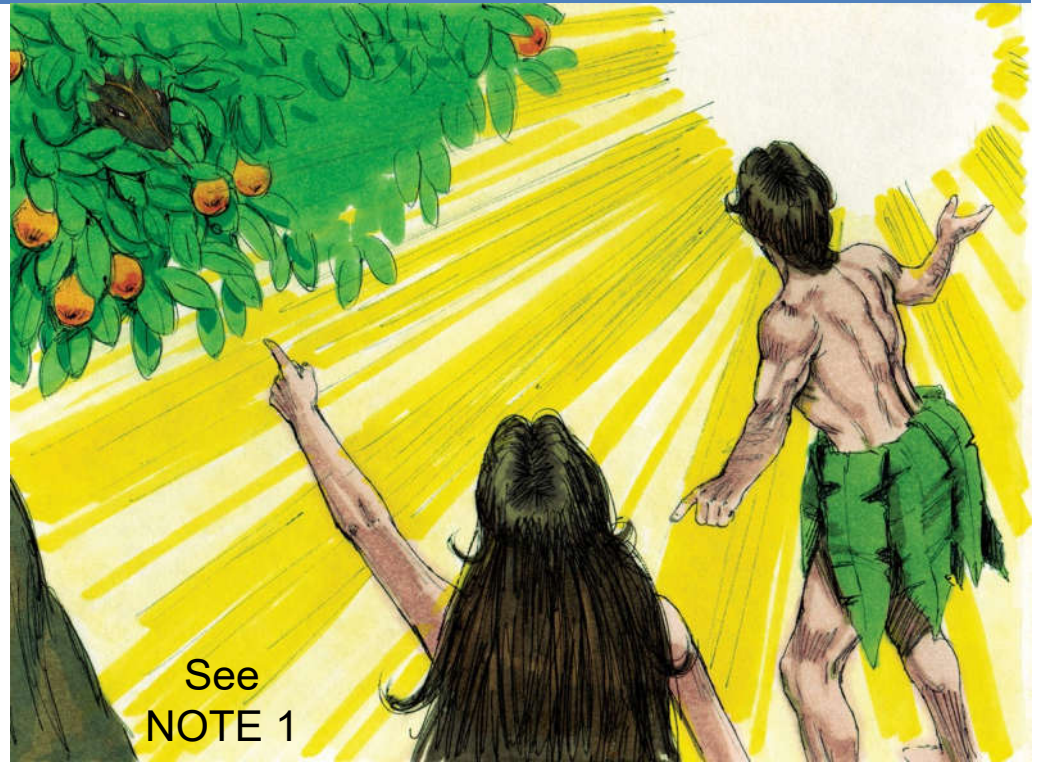


PAIN & DIFFICULT WORK

❑ Pain and difficult work

- discipline for not obeying God's direct commands.

- Gen 3:16-17 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with **pain** you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through **painful toil** you will eat of it all the days of your life."



MOSES

❑ Failure to realise our dreams - discipline for dishonouring God publicly when in a position of leadership.

➤ Num 20:11-12 Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water

gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."



DAVID

- ❑ Death of his son and loss of God's former protection over his family - After David's sin of adultery and murder.



See
NOTE 2

Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, **the sword will never depart from your house**, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. (2 Sam 12:9-10)

DROUGHT

❑ **Drought** - discipline for sin.



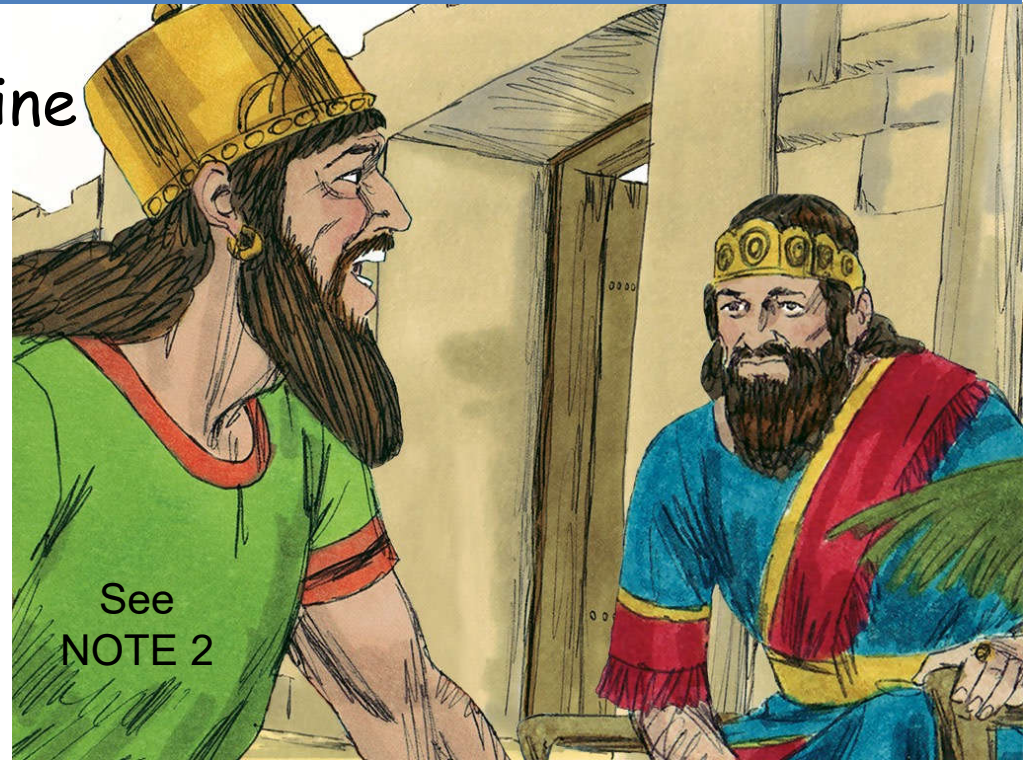
See
NOTE 2

When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance. (2 Chron 6:26-27)

LOSS OF PROPERTY

❑ **Loss of property** - discipline for ungodly alliances.

- 2 Chron 20:35-37
Later, Jehoshaphat king of Judah made an alliance with Ahaziah king of Israel, who was guilty of wickedness. He



agreed with him to construct a fleet of trading ships. After these were built at Ezion Geber, Eliezer ... prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have made an alliance with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made." The ships were wrecked and were not able to set sail to trade.

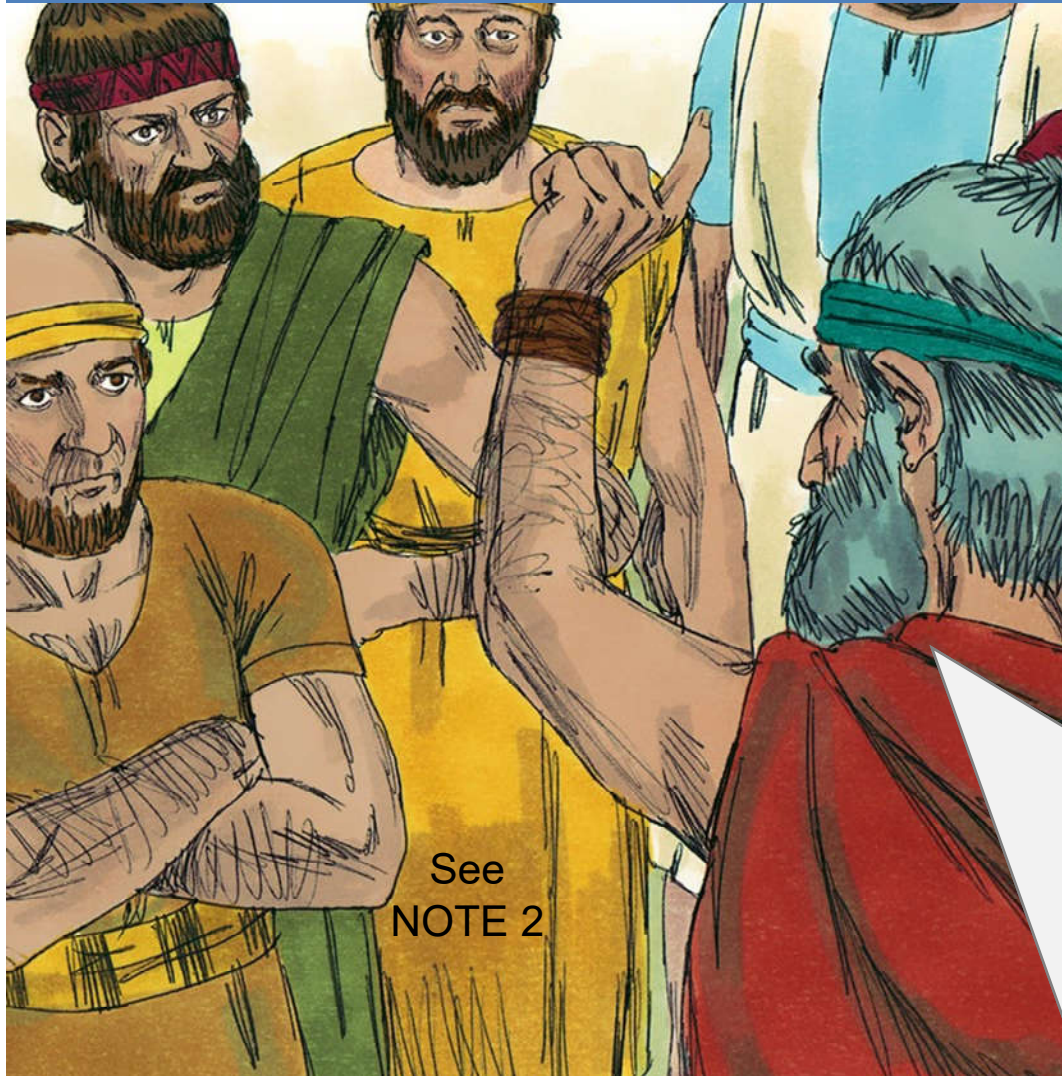
FAILURE

- ❑ **Failure in our ventures** - discipline for relying on man rather than God.
- 2 Chron 16:7-9 At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: "Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD your God, **the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand.** Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and **from now on you will be at war.**"



See NOTE 1

POLITICAL DISASTER



See
NOTE 2

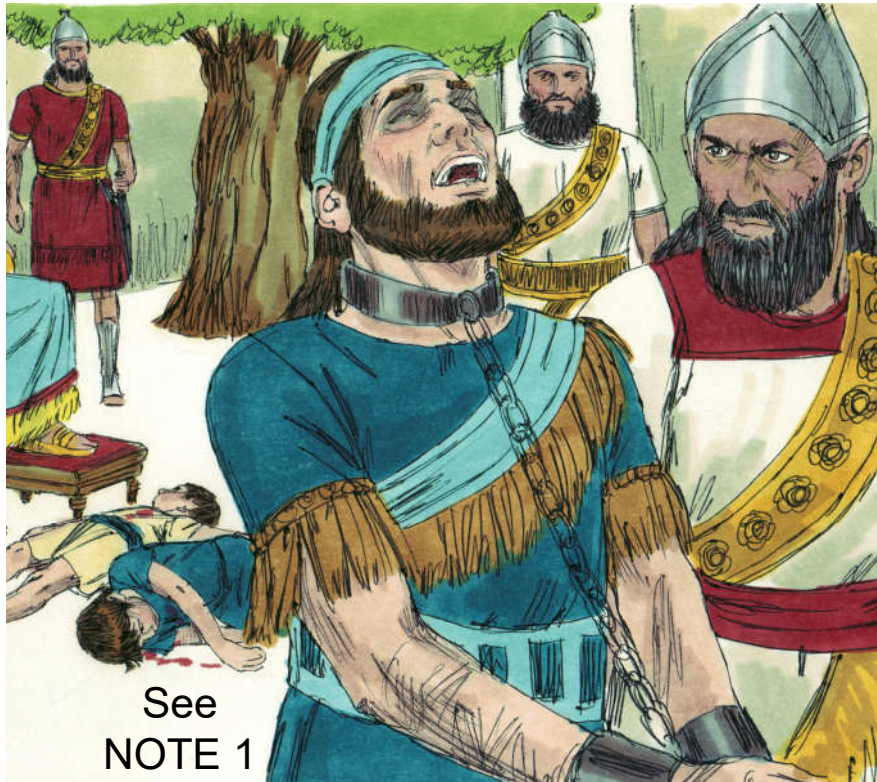
- ❑ **National Disaster** - discipline for spiritual unfaithfulness.

When the LORD could no longer endure your wicked actions and the detestable things you did, **your land became an object of cursing and a desolate waste** without inhabitants, as it is today. Because you have burned incense and have sinned against the LORD and have not obeyed him or followed his law or his decrees or his stipulations, this disaster has come upon you, as you now see. (Jer 44:22-23)

POLITICAL UNREST

- ❑ Loss of God's favour, scattering of family units, war, famine, plague and death - for idolatry.
- Ezek 5:11-12 Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I

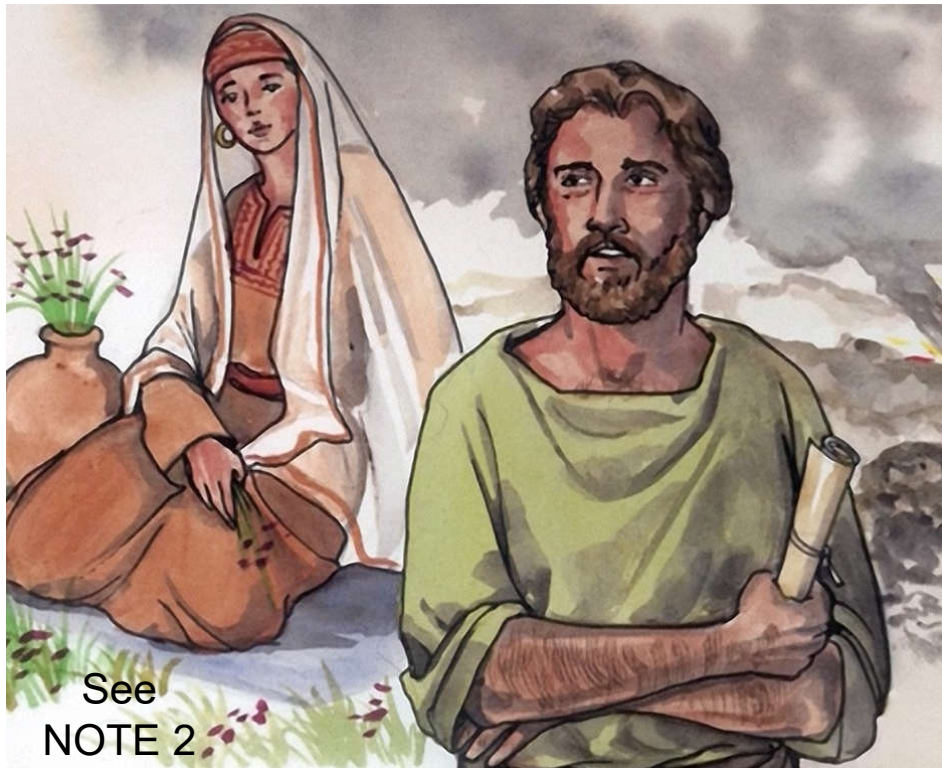
myself will withdraw my favour; I will not look on you with pity or spare you. A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword.



See
NOTE 1

NO ANSWER TO PRAYER

- ❑ **No answer to prayer** - discipline for breaking agreements and not honouring our covenants (like marriage).
- Mal 2:13-14 Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.



See
NOTE 2

A CURSE

❑ A curse - discipline for robbing God.

- Mal 3:8-11 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'



"In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit" ...

SICKNESS

❑ **Sickness** - discipline for disregarding unconfessed sin.

- 1 Cor 11:28-32 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why

many among you are **weak and sick**, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

When we are judged by the Lord, **we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.**



ONLY SINNERS SUFFER?

- ❑ Are all who suffer under God's judgement?
 - Luke 13:4-5 "Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."
- ❑ Jesus is saying that they were no worse sinners than anyone else. i.e. Sometimes bad things happen to "good" people.
- ❑ Jesus also says that sometimes good things happen to bad people.
 - Matt 5:45 ... your Father in heaven ... causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

SICKNESS

- ❑ Jesus' words of caution to the lame man he healed at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5) indicate that his former sickness was a punishment for some specific sin.

See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you. (John 5:14)



See
NOTE 2

VESSELS OF GOD'S GLORY

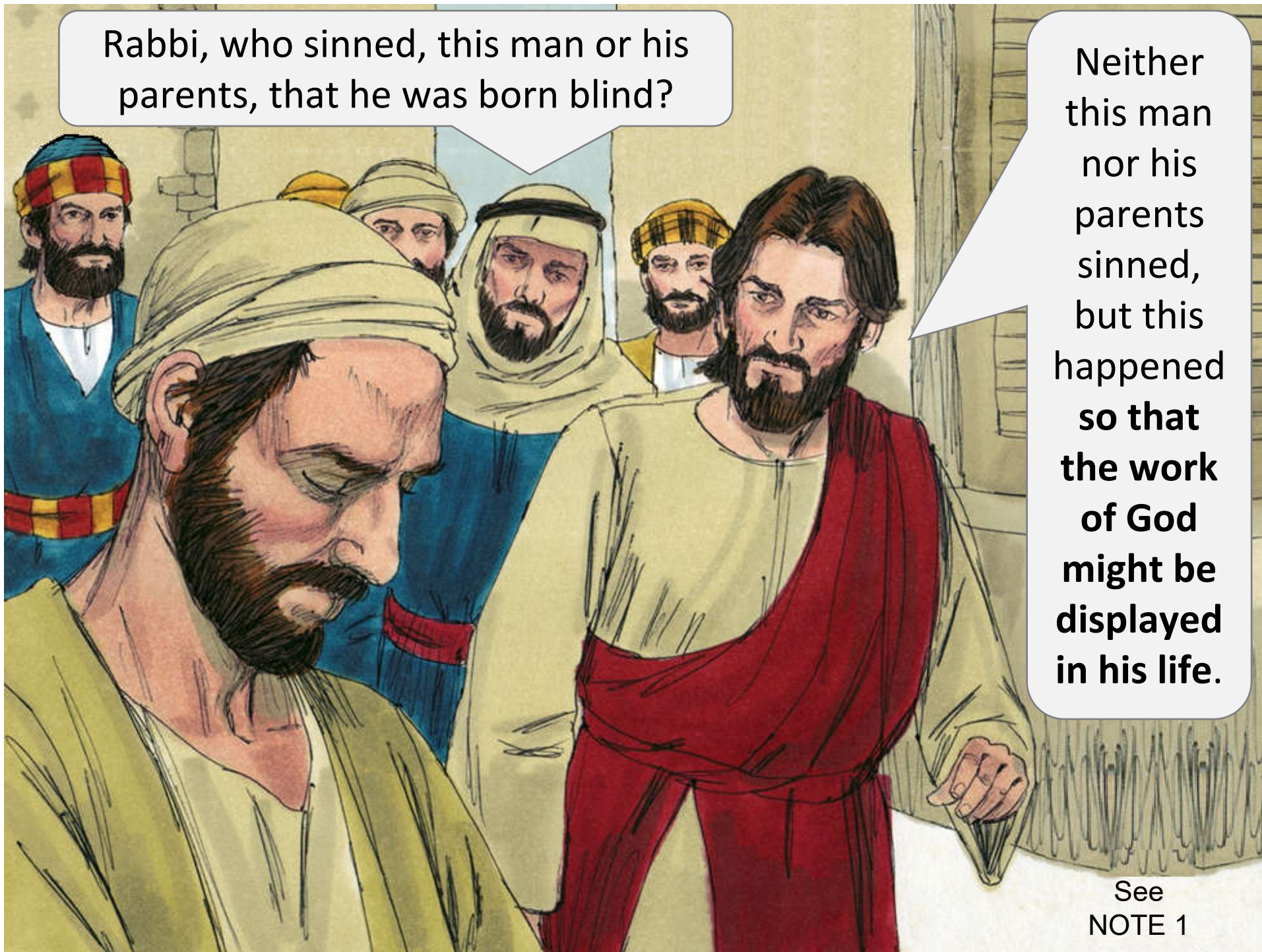
Is all sickness a result of sin? No!

- 2) Sometimes suffering enables us to be used as a vessel for God's glory.
- Suffering, with dignity, may enable you to mark more lives for Christ than anything else you say or do for Christ. ~ Bill Hybels
 - The blindness of the man in John 9 was due to living in a fallen world (he wouldn't have been born blind if there was no Fall). But Jesus said his suffering provided an opportunity for him to ultimately be a vessel for God's glory.

Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

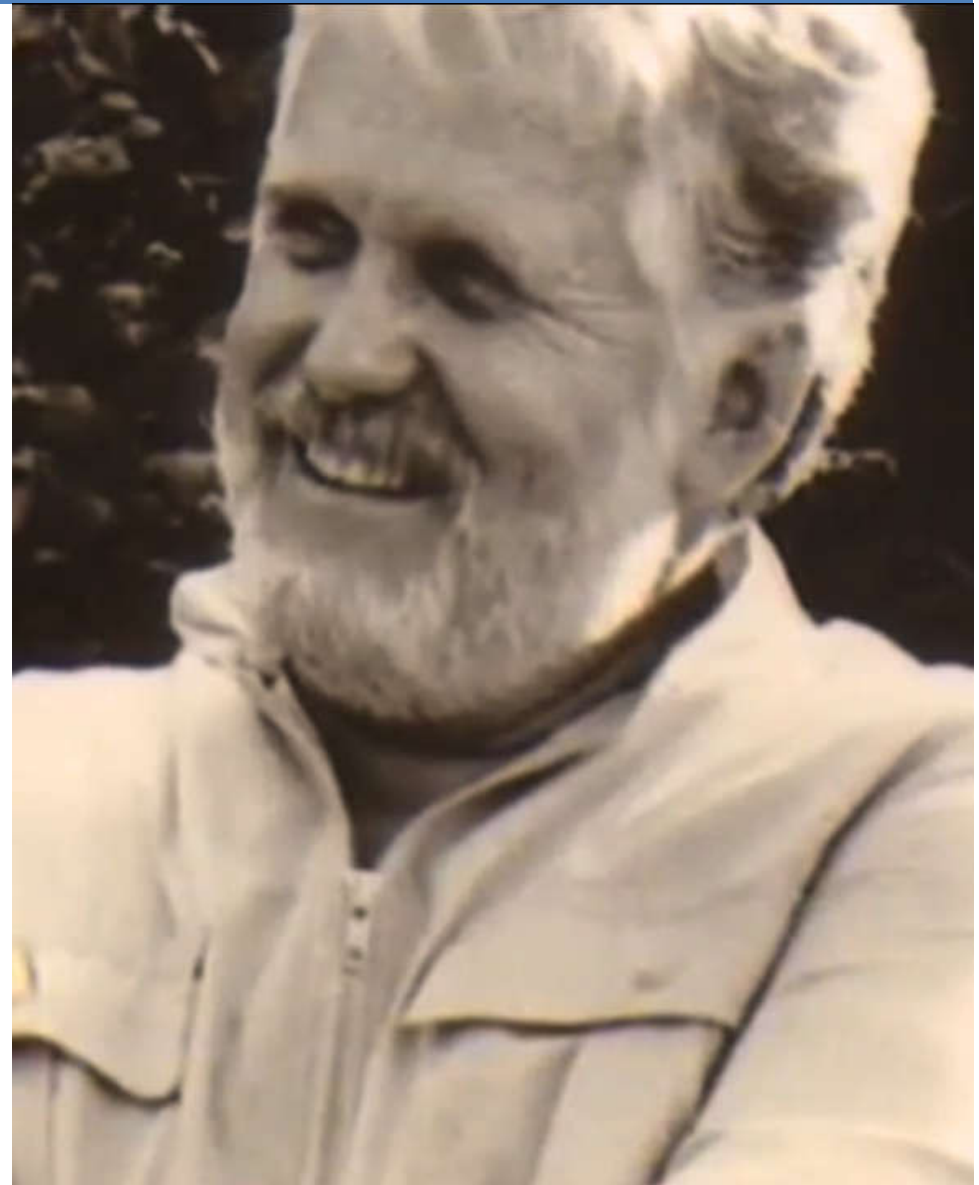
Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

See
NOTE 1



VESSELS OF GOD'S GLORY

- ❑ John Wimber was one of the founders of the Vineyard church movement in southern California. He tells of a Christian man whose teenage daughter was brutally murdered by a young man who attempted to rape her. Utterly desolate, the father went back to his house and gathered his family and prayed, "Father, I don't understand. But I trust you." →



John Wimber (1934 – 1997)

VESSELS OF GOD'S GLORY

← Over the months and years that followed, he experienced a profound motivation to make Christ known. The story of his daughter's murder, the pursuit of her killer, the trial, and the father's forgiveness of the young man were front-page news for months in the Los Angeles area. People knew about him and were willing to listen to him. Through his testimony to Christ, hundreds of people came to faith in Jesus.

Some years later, his 22-year-old only son who had just graduated from college - a wonderful Christian, a fine athlete, a brilliant student - was in an auto accident and his skull was crushed. Today this father cares for his big, handsome boy, who functions with significant handicaps and must be watched at all times. →

VESSELS OF GOD'S GLORY

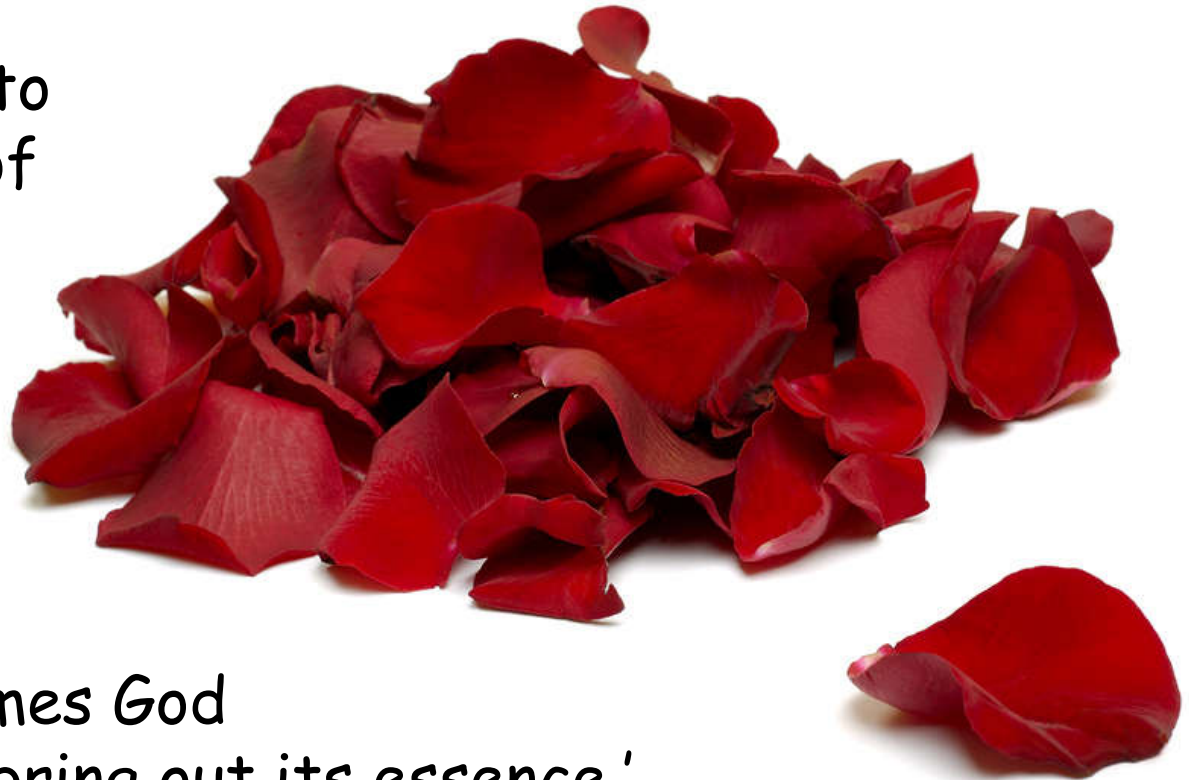
← However, the mysterious working of God's purposes, which would have driven many into unbelief, has driven this man on. He continued to pray, "Father, I don't understand, but I trust you." He continues to lead people to Christ. Wimber says: "I am one of them. One evening years ago I knelt in this man's living room, and he prayed for me as I turned my life over to Christ..."

I am sure that if I were designing a program to prepare an evangelist, I would never come up with anything like that... But God's action in this man's life produced a broken and contrite heart, and a highly motivated personality. He went out and has done the job the Lord gave him from that day forth. →

VESSELS OF GOD'S GLORY

← If we are going to pursue the things of the Lord, we will often not understand what he is doing... As my friend always used to tell me, 'Sometimes God crushes a petal to bring out its essence.'

Sometimes he offends our minds to reveal our hearts. God may not remove our suffering, but he can transform it into something that will bring benefit to us and glory to him - if that is what we desire, and if we will trust him to do so."¹



¹ Christianity Today

HEARING GOD SPEAK

3) God speaks to us through suffering.

➤ Ps 119:71 (NLT) My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees.

□ C.S. Lewis wrote: "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but **shouts in our pains**: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." This excerpt was from "The Problem of Pain" written in 1940, 20 years before his beloved wife, Joy Davidman, died of cancer in the third year of their marriage. Lewis considered the problem of suffering from a purely theoretical standpoint but years later, struck with the grief of a mourning husband he wrote another classic on pain, "A Grief Observed".



Joy Davidman
(1915-1960)

TEST OF INTEGRITY

4) Suffering may be a test of our integrity e.g. God allowed Satan to inflict Job with suffering to **test his integrity**.

➤ Job 2:3 Then the LORD said to 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. And **he still maintains his integrity...**"

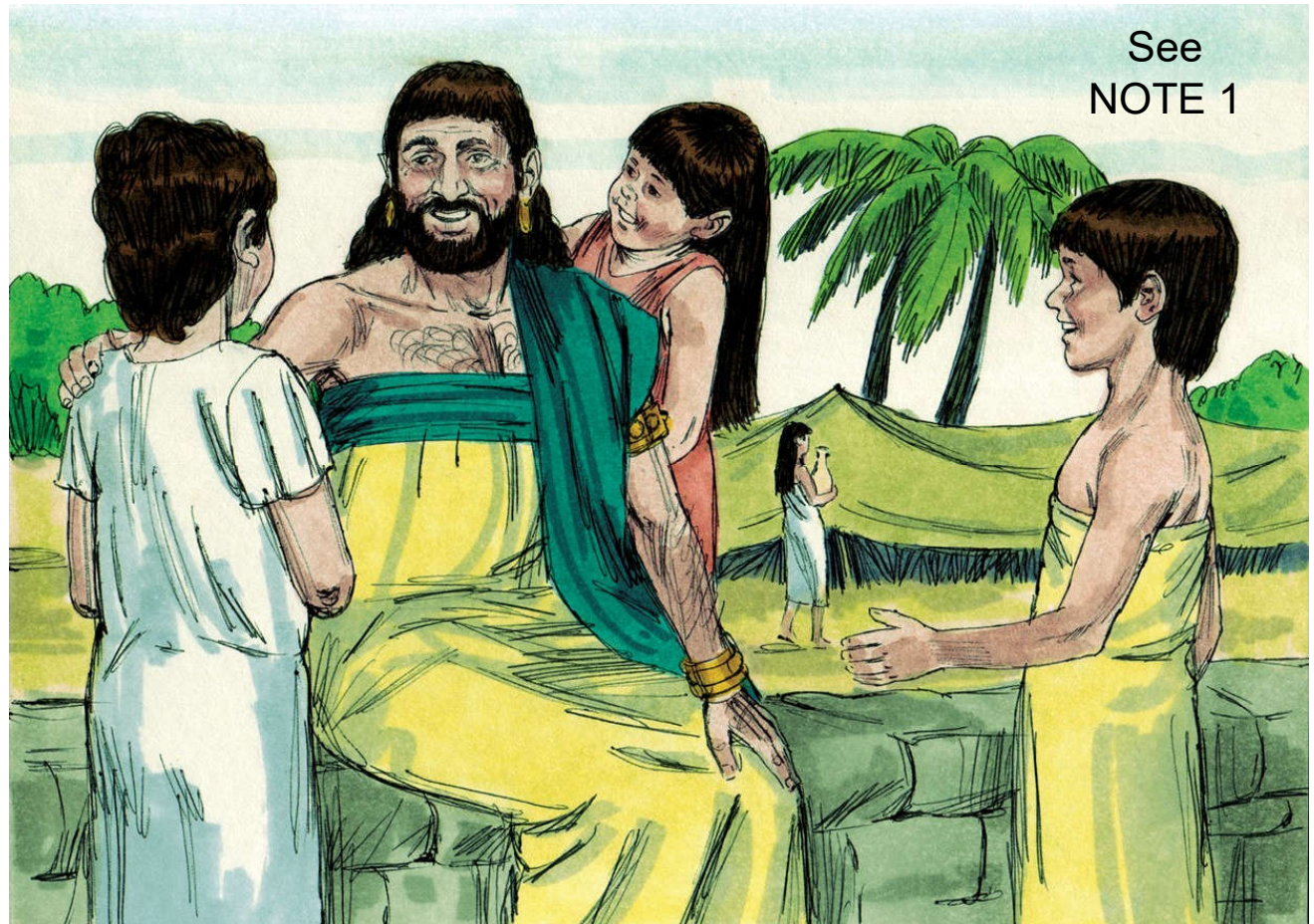
❑ When Job learnt that he had lost his livestock, servants and all his children:

➤ ... he fell to the ground in worship and said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.' In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. (Job 1:20-22)

TEST OF INTEGRITY

- ❑ The Book of Job is written primarily to address the problem of suffering in the world. The five main characters debate if a good person could ever suffer - or if God would always prevent it.

- Job was a righteous and just man, besides being healthy, prosperous, and blessed with a large family.



TEST OF INTEGRITY

Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. (Job 1:9-10)

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NOTE 1



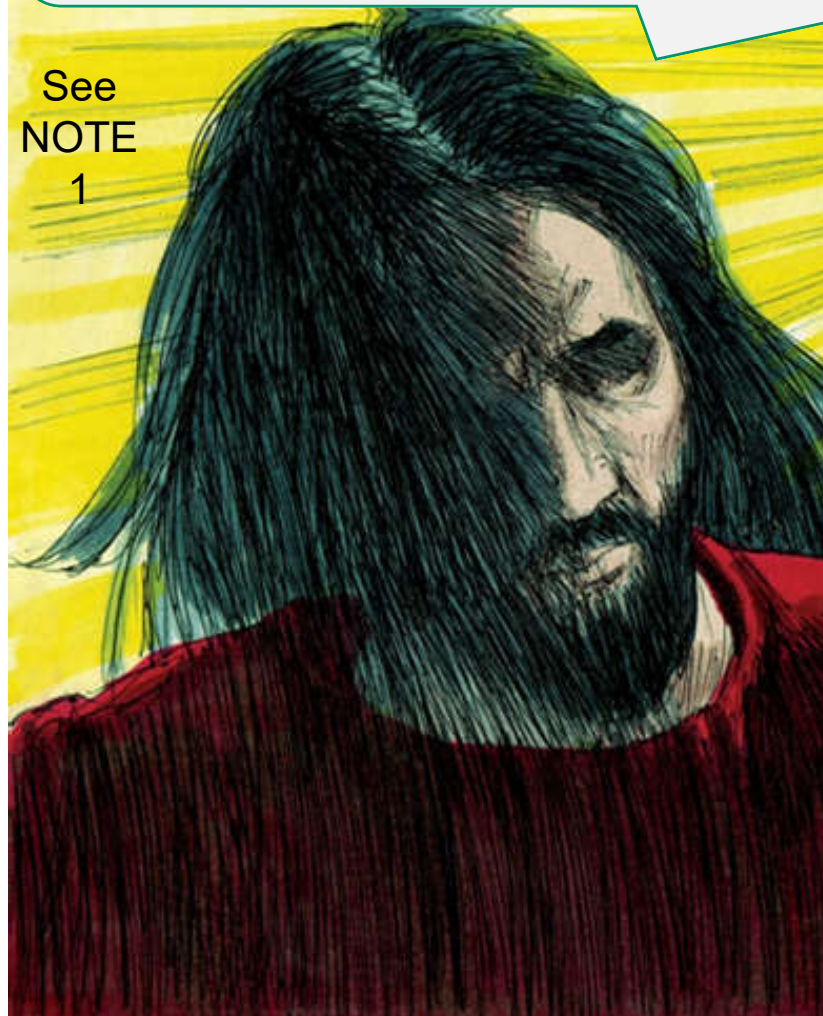
Satan challenged God, claiming that Job served God out of convenience and was only righteous because God had sheltered him and rewarded him. Satan alleged that if God were to allow everything Job loved to be removed, he would cease to be righteous.

TEST OF INTEGRITY

A look behind the scenes indicates that although God did not initiate the suffering, he permitted Satan to test Job by destroying his wealth, children and health. The book of Job indicates that Satan cannot touch God's people without his express permission and even then, with limitations.

But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face. (Job 1:11)

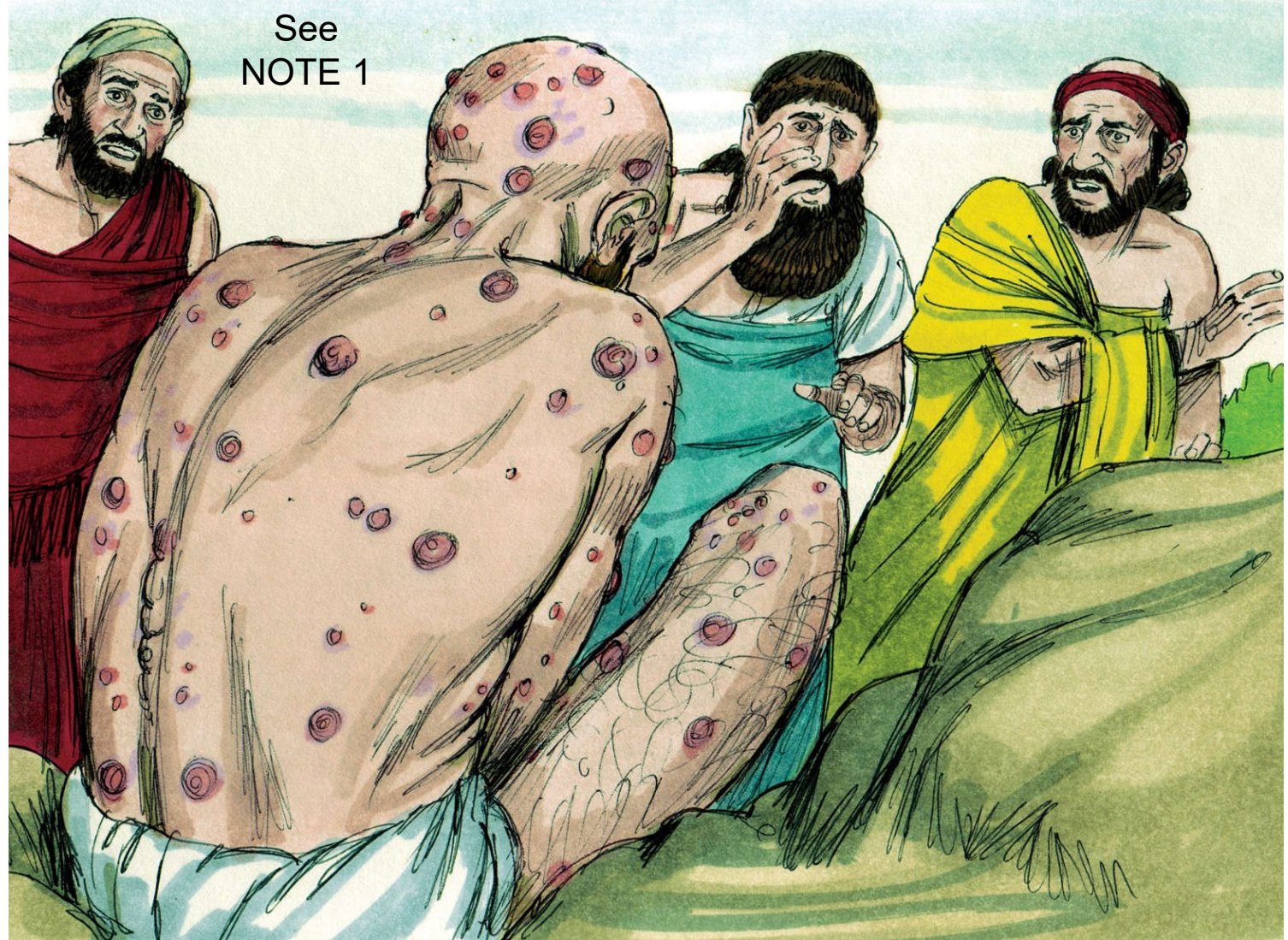
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NOTE
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Very well, then, **everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.**
(Job 1:12)

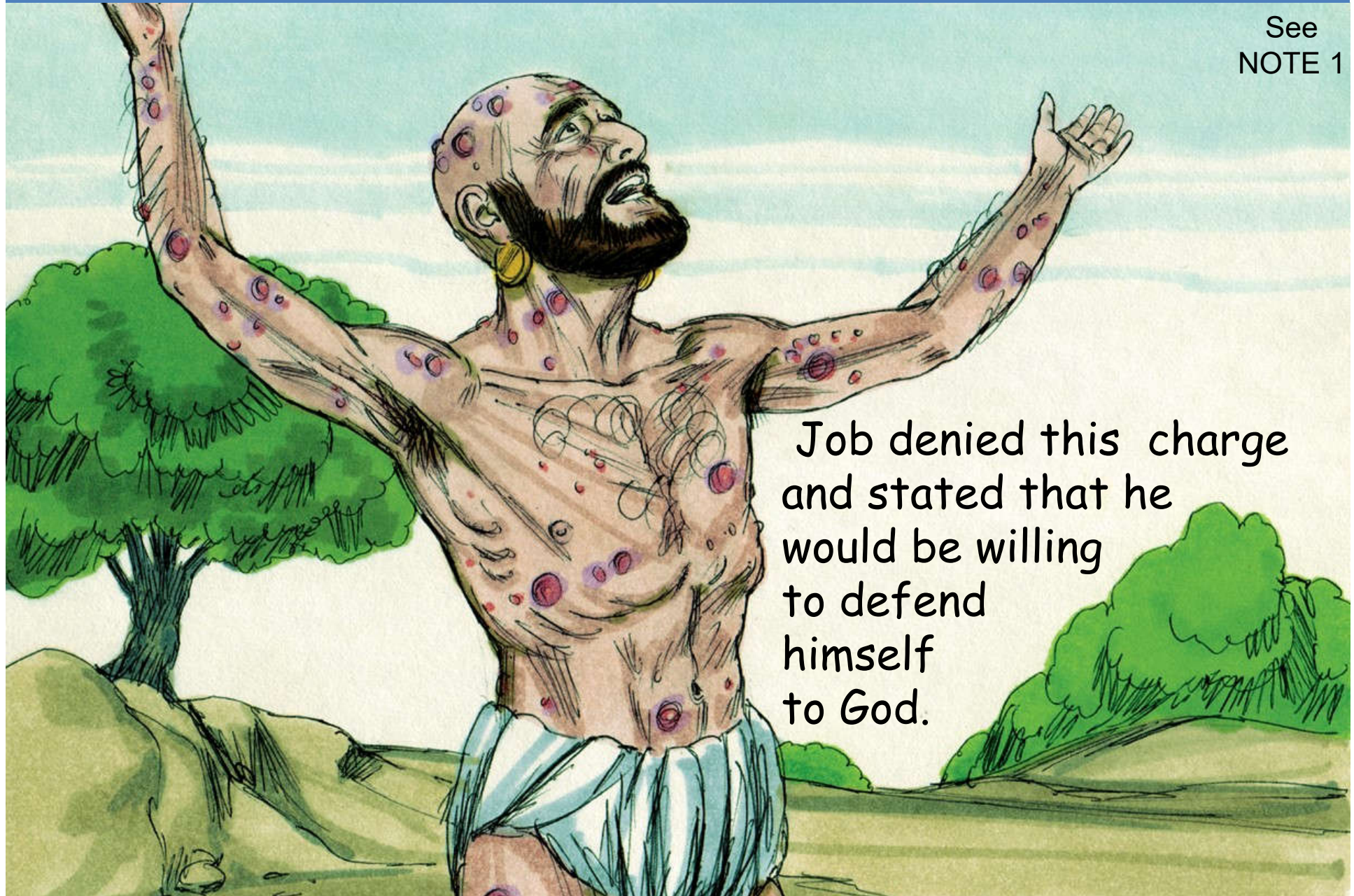
TEST OF INTEGRITY

Job is visited by three friends, who are shocked at his situation, but insist that God never allows bad things to happen to good people. They are convinced that Job must have done something to deserve his punishment.



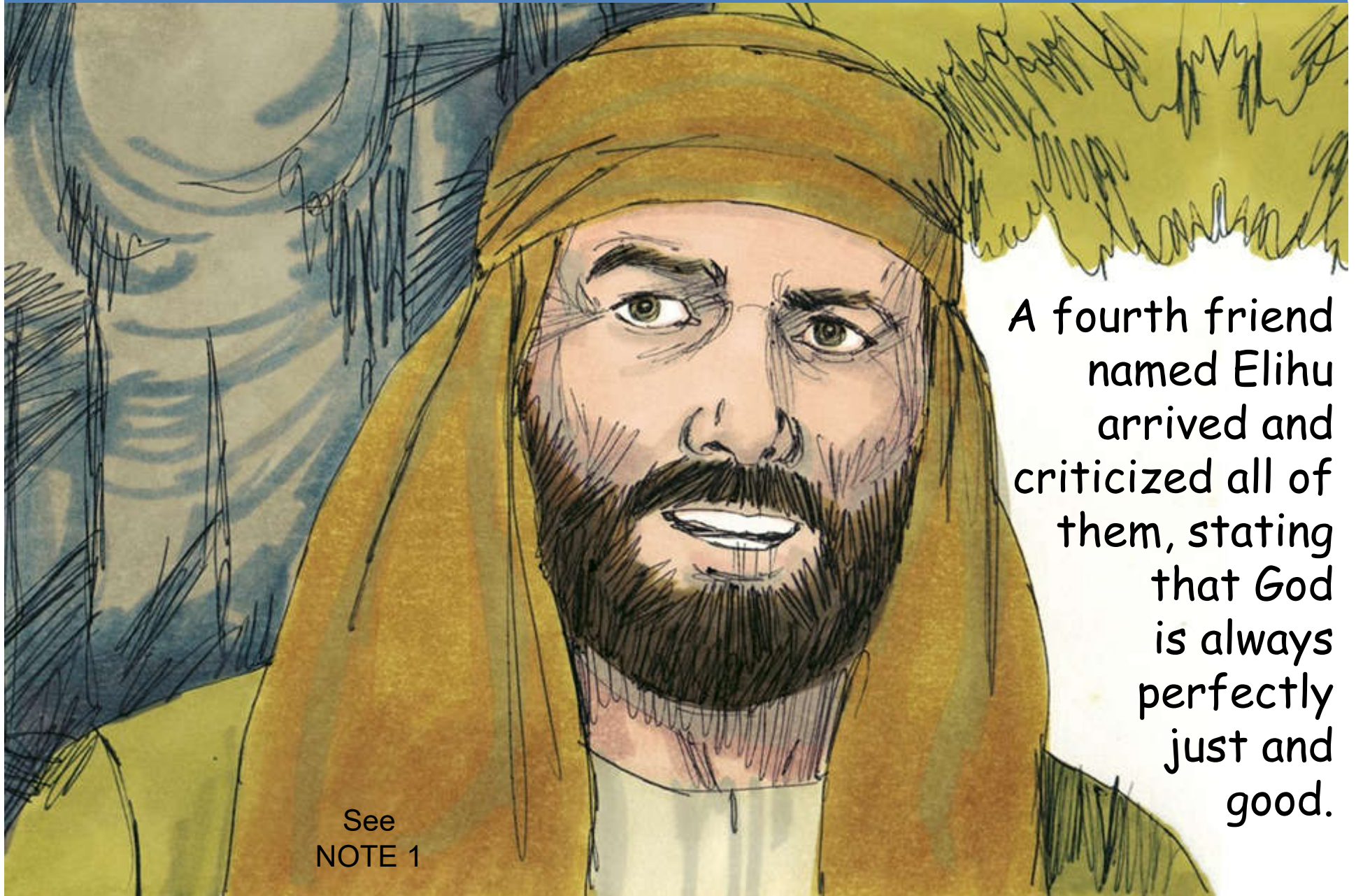
TEST OF INTEGRITY

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NOTE 1



Job denied this charge and stated that he would be willing to defend himself to God.

TEST OF INTEGRITY

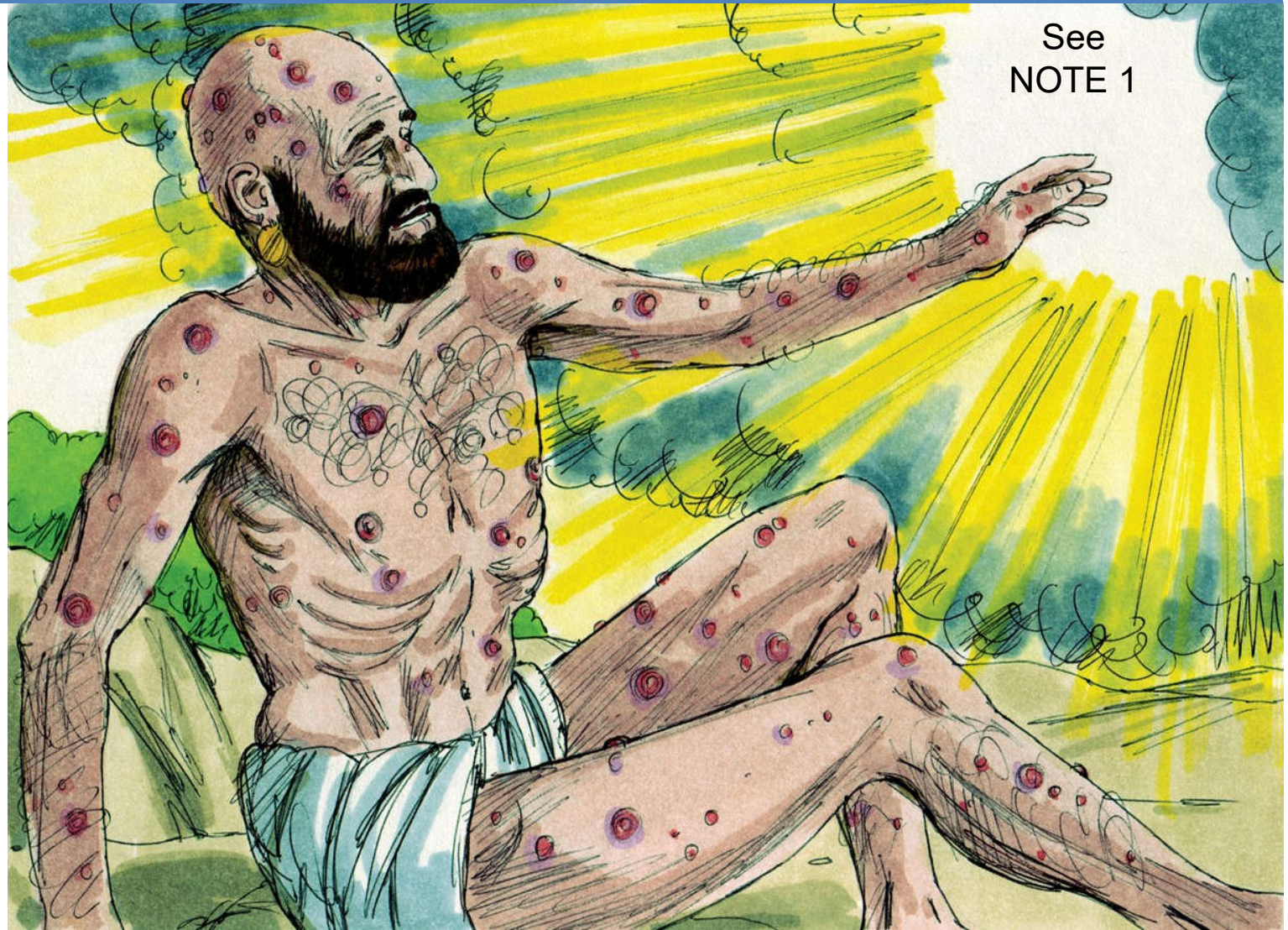


A fourth friend
named Elihu
arrived and
criticized all of
them, stating
that God
is always
perfectly
just and
good.

See
NOTE 1

TEST OF INTEGRITY

God then responded directly to Job, explaining that the workings of the world are beyond human's limited



understanding because we do not see the big picture of the universe from God's perspective.

TEST OF INTEGRITY

God stated that Job's three friends were incorrect, but that Job was also at fault for questioning God.

See
NOTE 1.



TEST OF INTEGRITY

□ God then restored Job's health, wealth and family. The book offers two answers to the problem of evil and suffering:

a) Suffering is not always discipline, but may be a test.

You will be rewarded later if you "pass the test".

b) God is not accountable to human's limited conceptions of morality.



TEST OF INTEGRITY

- ❑ Can Satan still test us like he did Job? Despite the teaching of some that Satan is powerless and 'can only roar, not bite', the context¹ of 1 Peter (written during Nero's persecution)² makes it clear that the lion has teeth.
 - 1 Pet 5:8-10 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. →

¹ Don't build your doctrine from 'one-liners' in the Bible - look at the context! Beware of those who use one verse out of context simply as a launch pad for unbiblical teaching.

² Tacitus writes of the persecution of Christians by Nero, "They died in torments, and their torments were embittered by insult and derision. Some were nailed on crosses; others sewn up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury of dogs; others again, smeared over with combustible materials, were used as torches to illuminate the darkness of the night. The gardens of Nero were destined for the melancholy spectacle..."

TEST OF INTEGRITY

← Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that **your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.** And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, **after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.**

- a) We are instructed to 'resist' Satan and to stand 'firm in the faith'.
- b) God's restoration comes "after you have suffered a little while".



1 Peter 5:8-9a

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast...

A photograph of a calm sea with white foam in the foreground and a clear sky. The text is overlaid in the center.

**A smooth sea never made
a skillful sailor.**

REFINING FAITH

5) Trials refine our faith.

- ❑ In Rev 3:18 Jesus speaks of gold which is "refined in the fire". In many Scriptures fire is used to symbolise suffering. Just as fire refines the gold, so our faith is refined by suffering.
- Job 23:10 But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.
- Prov 17:3 The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the heart.
- Zech 13:9 This third I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"

DEVELOP CHARACTER

6) God uses suffering to develop our character.

- The purpose of Christianity is not to avoid difficulty, but to produce a character adequate to meet it when it comes. It does not make life easy, rather it tries to make us great enough for life. ~ James L Christensen.

❑ Suffering develops perseverance, character and hope

- Rom 5:3-4 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that **suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.**
- Don't pray for a light load - pray for a strong back.

PREVENT PRIDE

- ❑ Suffering is a means of preventing spiritual pride
 - 2 Cor 12:7 To **keep me from becoming conceited** because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a **thorn in my flesh**, a messenger of Satan, to **torment** me.
- ❑ Some speculate that Paul's thorn in his flesh was poor eyesight (Gal 4:15 ¹ & 6:11 ²)



¹ ... I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.

² See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!

EMPATHY

- ❑ We learn empathy for others when we suffer.
- ❑ Amy Carmichael was an unlikely candidate for the life of a missionary. She suffered from neuralgia, a disease that stimulates the nerves to feel pain and which caused Amy to have to spend entire weeks in bed. Despite her own suffering, Amy remained remarkably **others-centred**. Because of her own trials, Amy was able to have a **remarkable empathy for the sufferings others had to endure...** →



Amy Carmichael
(1867-1951)

EMPATHY

← ... offering comfort and refreshment even when those trials were comparatively mild compared with hers. Perhaps the greatest lesson that Amy's life and writings teach us is how to know Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. Suffering was a constant companion to Amy. Despite the bodily hardships she faced, her worst sufferings were not even physical. Having so much love and tenderness in her heart, words cannot describe her anguish when occasionally she would lose a child she thought she had rescued, sometimes from her very doorstep. Despite the difficulties of her life, the Lord helped Amy to see these sufferings positively, as battle wounds and honours gained in the service of her Saviour.¹ The following excerpt from a poem by Amy reveals her approach to suffering:

¹ <http://www.christianvoice.org.uk/index.php/heroes-of-faith>

From prayer that asks that I may be
Sheltered from winds that beat on Thee,
From fearing when I should aspire,
From faltering when I should climb higher
From silken self, O Captain, free
Thy soldier who would follow Thee.

From subtle love of softening things,
From easy choices, weakening,
(Not thus are spirits fortified,
Not this way went the Crucified)
From all that dims Thy Calvary
O Lamb of God, deliver me.

Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay
The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire...

DEVELOP CHARACTER

- ❑ Joanie Yoder writes:
- ❑ I was in my second year of widowhood and I was struggling. Morning after morning my prayer-life consisted of one daily sigh: "Lord, I shouldn't be struggling like this!" "And why not?" his still, small voice asked me from within one morning. Then the answer came—unrecognized pride! Somehow I had thought that a person of my spiritual maturity should be beyond such struggle.



**Joanie Yoder
(1934-2004)**

DEVELOP CHARACTER

- ❑ What a ridiculous thought! I had never been a widow before and needed the freedom to be a true learner—even a struggling learner.
- ❑ At the same time, I was reminded of the story of a man who took home a cocoon so he could watch the emperor moth emerge. As the moth struggled to get through the tiny opening, the man enlarged it with a snip of his scissors. →



DEVELOP CHARACTER

← The moth emerged easily—but its wings were shrivelled. The struggle through the narrow opening is God's way to force fluid from its body into its wings. The 'merciful' snip, in reality, was cruel.

Hebrews 12 describes the Christian life as a race that involves endurance, discipline, and correction. We never get beyond the need of a holy striving against self and sin. Sometimes the struggle is exactly what we need to become what God intends us to be.



CONCLUSION

- ❑ Likewise, suffering is a necessary part of becoming **mature adult Christians**.
- James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face **trials of many kinds**, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be **mature and complete**, not lacking anything.



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