

Topic 3: Why Do We Suffer?

Exploring different beliefs about suffering, why it happens and how people respond.

1 KEY VOCABULARY

Word	Meaning
Suffering	Pain or hardship that is physical, emotional, mental or spiritual.
Evil	Serious wrongdoing or harm that causes suffering.
Free will	The ability to make our own choices.
The Problem of Evil	The belief that evil and suffering exist in a world created by an all-loving, all-powerful God.
The Fall	In Christianity, when humans disobeyed God and suffering entered the world.
Salvation	Being saved from sin and its consequences.
Dukkha	Suffering or unsatisfactoriness in life (Buddhism).
Tanha (Craving)	Desire or attachment that causes suffering (Buddhism).

2 EXPLANATIONS FOR SUFFERING



- Human choices** – People make wrong choices that cause harm to themselves and others.
- Natural causes** – Natural disasters and disease cause suffering but are not caused by humans.
- Chance** – Some suffering happens by accident or unexpected events.
- Free will** – If God gave humans free will, people can choose to do wrong.
- Spiritual separation** – In Christianity, humans' separation from God (the Fall) leads to suffering.
- The Problem of Evil** – If God is all-loving, all-powerful and all-good, why does evil and suffering exist in the world? This is a major challenge for people of faith.



There is no single answer to why suffering exists.

3

RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO SUFFERING



Christianity

- God gave humans free will.
- The Fall brought sin and suffering into the world.
- God is with us in suffering and offers comfort and hope through Jesus.

"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

1 Peter 5:7



Judaism

- Suffering is part of living in a broken world.
- People should study the Torah to help them live.
- Suffering is a strength test that can bring faith and character.

"The righteous cry, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles."

Psalm 34:17



Islam

- Everything happens by Allah's will (Qadr).
- Suffering is a test of faith and patience.
- Believers trust in Allah and do good deeds.

"Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease."

Qur'an 94:5-6



Buddhism

- Life involves suffering (Dukkha).
- Suffering is caused by craving (Tanha) and attachment.
- The goal is enlightenment (Nirvana) – freedom from suffering.

"All life is suffering."

The Buddha



Humanism

- Suffering happens, but there is no God.
- We must find meaning in life ourselves.
- Science and moral action can help improve the world.

"The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge."

Humanists UK

4 THE SUFFERING OF JESUS



- Jesus suffered and was crucified for the sins of others.
- He was betrayed, arrested, mocked and tortured.
- Christians believe Jesus took the punishment for human sin.
- His death shows God understands human suffering.
- Jesus' resurrection gives hope of new life after suffering.



Christians believe suffering can have meaning through Jesus' sacrifice and hope.

5 KEY PEOPLE



Jesus – Central figure of Christianity. His suffering and crucifixion show love and lead to salvation and hope for Christians.

Source: The Bible



Siddhartha Gautama (The Buddha) – Founder of Buddhism. He taught that craving is the cause of suffering but we can end suffering by following the Eightfold Path.

Source: The Tripitaka



Job – A faithful man who suffered greatly but did not lose faith in God. His story helps Christians understand why good people can suffer.

Source: The Bible

6

KNOWLEDGE SUMMARY



Suffering is a universal part of the human experience.



There are different explanations for why suffering happens.



The Problem of Evil challenges belief in an all-loving, all-powerful God.



Religious beliefs offer comfort, hope and meaning in times of suffering.



Buddhism teaches that suffering is caused by craving and can end.



Religious and non-religious people try to reduce suffering and help others.



WE CARE

We show kindness, respect and understanding towards others.



WE CHALLENGE

We ask big questions, think deeply and explore different views.



WE COMMIT

We are proud of our learning and our community.



WIDER READING

Read more about suffering, faith and how religions respond to life's big questions.