

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING? PART A

John 9

Theme: Jesus is the answer to life's hard issues

Purpose:

- **To provide biblical insight on questions that are hard and universal to every culture.**
- **To point the listener to Jesus as the ultimate answer to these questions.**

**Episode 4 of 7
HARD QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD SERIES
(15 MIN. FORMAT)
CHRISTIAN RADIO DRAMA
“THE STORY WITHIN”**

004



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Hard Questions About God Series
Episode 4 of 7: Why Does God Allow
Suffering? Part A
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DIRECTORIAL INFORMATION

CAST OF CHARACTERS: (note voice quality required)

- **Each voice should be recognizably different from any other character.**
- **Some characters appear in multiple episodes of this series. Use the same voice for the same character.**

Thomas: **Narrator, a disciple of Jesus** (voice of a mature man)
Philip: **Disciple of Jesus** (voice of a mature man)
Jesus: **The Son of God** (warm voice of a mature man)
Jacob: **Old man, blind from birth** (voice of an elderly man)
Aaron: **Young priest** (voice of a proud young man)

Director's notes to all readers:

- These are radio **dramas**. The action and emotions are in the words. Take your time in reading the story; remember that the listener will hear these words only once; speak distinctly with appropriate emotion; carefully observe all punctuation (i.e., pause at commas, stop at periods, intensify at exclamation points, and give special emphasis to words in **bold type**).
- Observe all **music** cues (bold/small print) throughout the script.
- Observe **sound effects** directions (bold print) throughout the script.
- Observe all **voice** instructions (bold print) in parentheses throughout the script.

Note to translators: When Scripture is used, the print is in italics, and it is the NIV (1984). Scripture references are given to aid the translators and should not be read as part of the script.

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING? PART A

Scripture reference: John 9

(Music: Theme music begins, then gradually fades to underscoring during comments by Program Host)

Program Host

Welcome to “The Story Within.”

Have you ever known anyone whose life is so difficult, whose trials are so hard, that you wonder how this person survives at all? Perhaps he was accused unjustly; perhaps she had everything she owned taken away from her; perhaps it was a crippling disease with no hope for a cure; perhaps it was all of the above, and perhaps – just perhaps – it was you who suffered all of this and much more.

To the many that daily face such overwhelming, relentless suffering, talk about God and His wonderful plan for our lives falls on deaf ears; experience seems to teach them that if there is in fact a God at all, He is either unaware or unconcerned about their plight. A valid question that they ask is this: If God is there, and if He truly cares about us, why does He allow so much suffering?

Dear friend, if you have ever found yourself in a situation of terrible suffering, and have asked this question, I have good news for you: God is not only there, He sees what you are going through, and He deeply cares for you.

Join us now as we listen to the fourth episode in our series on Hard Questions About God, based on events and people found in God's Word.

(Music: swells to indicate scene change; then fades to soft underscoring)

Notice that scene changes are depicted with music.

Scene 1

INSERT: (Sound effects: nighttime; a soft breeze and crickets chirping in the background)

Thomas (narrator): My name is Thomas, and I was a disciple of Jesus. I did not ask to be appointed to this situation; I was minding my own business as a merchant of leather goods, when Jesus approached me, and with very little introduction, asked me to follow Him. Since I was not a religious man, and in fact did not even believe in God, I should have smiled, and politely declined, and returned to my business.

INSERT: (Sound effects: add the sound of a softly crackling fire)

Thomas (narrator): (sighs) But for some reason that I did not understand at the time, I put down my tools, left my home and my father's business, and followed Jesus. It was a rash decision, I admit; but over the weeks that followed, I found that Jesus was unoffended by my lingering doubts and questions, and in fact He encouraged me to discuss them openly. And before long, after witnessing with my own eyes Jesus perform several miracles, I realized that I no longer doubted the existence of God; to my surprise, my long-

held resentment and anger toward religious people was fading. Even so, as I continued to follow this amazing, astonishing Man, I found myself beginning to struggle with other questions that were not as easily answered.

INSERT: (Sound effects: add murmuring voices around the campfire)

Thomas: (softly) Jesus . . . may I ask You a question?

Jesus: Certainly, Thomas.

Thomas: That old man we met along the road today . . . the one who had been born blind . . .

Jesus: Yes?

Thomas: Why was it necessary for You to heal him? Do not get me wrong, I am happy for him that You came along and now he sees perfectly, but . . .

Jesus: But you want to know why God would allow him to be born blind.

INSERT: (Sound effects: the murmuring voices come to a halt)

Thomas: Yes, exactly. Was it . . . was it because of some hidden sin?

Philip: Yes, *“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”* (John 9:2)

Jesus: (chuckling) Philip, do you imagine that God strikes all who sin with blindness? Who then would be able to see? No, *“neither this man nor his parents sinned”* (John 9:3).

Thomas: But then . . . why? Why would God allow this to happen?

Jesus: *“This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life”*

(John 9:3).

Thomas: I do not understand.

Jesus: Tell me, Thomas; what else happened today, besides a man who had been blind for many years receiving his sight?

Thomas: Well . . .

Philip: (chuckling) There was quite a stir among the old man’s neighbors when they found out what had happened to him . . .

Jesus: Yes, there was; what was the debate about?

INSERT: (Sound effects: the murmuring resumes as everyone begins talking about what happened; the voices fade as Thomas speaks)

Thomas: (over the murmuring) Why, everyone was astonished over the healing; some even wondered if it was not the same man who had sat and begged for years. They said, *“He only looks like him”* (John 9:9).

Philip: Yes, *“but he himself insisted, ‘I am the man’”* (John 9:9).

Thomas: His neighbors kept arguing about it, and he must have repeated the story about how You healed him a dozen times as the crowd kept growing.

Jesus: And what did they do to resolve the controversy?

INSERT: (Sound effects: the murmuring turns to animated chattering as everyone begins talking about what happened; the voices continue this time as Thomas and Philip speak)

Thomas: (over the murmuring) They took him to the religious leaders at the synagogue.

Philip: (over the murmuring) They questioned him about the healing like he was a criminal.

Thomas: (over the murmuring) They were not happy about it at all.

INSERT: (Sound effects: the chattering stops as Jesus begins to speak, but immediately resumes after His question)

Jesus: And what did these religious leaders do?

Philip: (over the murmuring) They called in witnesses . . .

Thomas: (over the murmuring) They quizzed his parents . . .

Philip: (over the murmuring) They quizzed the man himself . . .

INSERT: (Sound effects: the chattering dies out as Jesus speaks)

Jesus: And what was the conclusion of their inquiries?

Thomas: They put him under oath, and asked him one last time, “*What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?*” (John 9:26)

Jesus: And how did he respond?

INSERT: (Sound effects: the chattering starts again)

Philip: (over the murmuring) “*He answered, ‘I have told you already and you did not listen . . .’*” (John 9:27).

INSERT: (Sound effects: the chattering grows in intensity, mixed with gleeful laughter and exclamations)

Philip: (over the murmuring) “. . . *Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?*” (John 9:27)

INSERT: (Sound effects: hoots and raucous laughter; after a moment the chattering and laughter slowly fade out through sporadic jags of chuckling and eventually die out altogether; we hear nothing but the campfire and crickets by the time Jesus speaks)

Jesus: (softly) And how did the religious leaders respond to his suggestion that they become My disciples?

Thomas: (softly) They hurled insults at him, and then threw him out of the synagogue.

Jesus: (softly) So, the man who had suffered blindness and mistreatment from his birth now sees, but he cannot enter the synagogue to worship the God who gave him his sight. It seems that his suffering did not end with his healing. This does not seem fair to you, does it?

INSERT: (Sound effects: brief, soft murmuring)

Thomas: No, Jesus; it does not seem fair.

Jesus: (softly) And yet, God was glorified today, was He not? A man received his sight; hundreds of people talked about it; the man himself testified before the religious authorities, “*If this man were not from God, he could do nothing*” (John 9:33).

INSERT: (Sound effects: someone yawns)

Jesus: (softly) There is work yet to be done, men; *“As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work”* (John 9:4). Tomorrow, we must visit our new friend with his restored sight. His suffering is not yet complete.

(Music: swells to indicate scene change; then fades to soft underscoring)

INTERMISSION

Program Host: Thank you for tuning in. You are listening to "The Story Within." Today we are following a series called, "Hard Questions About God," based on events and people found in God's Word. Previously in our story, Thomas had responded to a call from Jesus to follow Him, and found himself among this Man's disciples as they moved about the countryside ministering and preaching hope and good news everywhere they went. But in spite of several incredible miracles that Jesus performed right before his eyes, Thomas still struggled with the meaning behind it all. For although he no longer questioned the existence of God, he did have questions about the suffering he still saw all around him. Listen now, as we continue our story.

(Music: underscoring fades out as sound effects return)

Scene 2

INSERT: (Sound effects: daytime on the streets of the town; we hear shuffling footsteps, birds singing, an occasional cart drawn by a donkey rumbles by, voices call out, the play and laughter of children)

Thomas: (above the noise) Have you spotted him yet, Philip?

Philip: (calling out from a distance) No, not yet! You?

Thomas: (above the noise) No, no sign of him. Wait a moment . . .

Philip: (calling out from a distance) What is it?

Thomas: (above the noise) There he is, over there – with Jesus!

INSERT: (Sound effects: rapid footsteps as the two head toward Jesus and the old man)

Jesus: (in the background) Friend, may I help you? You seem to be looking for something.

Jacob: (in the background) I am, indeed. I am looking for the Teacher who came through town yesterday, so that I may thank Him. But I do not even know His name.

INSERT: (Sound effects: the voices grow stronger as Thomas and Philip draw nearer)

Jesus: (from a nearer distance) He is called by many names. *“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”* (John 9:35).

Jacob: (from a nearer distance) *“Who is he sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him”* (John 9:36).

INSERT: (Sound effects: the footsteps come to a halt)

Jesus: (now close at hand) *“You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one who is speaking with you”* (John 9:37).

INSERT: (Sound effects: the old man gasps and slumps down to his knees)

Jacob: (softly) It was You! I should have recognized Your voice! And now . . . now I have seen You with my own, my very own eyes! **(with emotion)** “*Lord . . . I believe*” (John 9:38).

INSERT: (Sound effects: murmuring voices and footsteps shuffling around them rise as a crowd gathers)

Jesus: I am glad for you my friend, that God has restored your sight; but do not confuse vision with understanding, for there are many who see perfectly and yet fail to comprehend what is right before their eyes. **(raising His voice)** “*For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind*” (John 9:39).

INSERT: (Sound effects: the murmuring suddenly rises, shocked)

Aaron: (above the clamoring) Now, wait just a moment; what are You trying to say, ‘Rabbi’? Do You refer to those of us who sit in authority with this insult? “*Are we blind too?*” (John 9:40)

INSERT: (Sound effects: the murmuring dies out, anticipating a response)

Jesus: Ah! A teacher of the law; I suspected that our conversation might attract you. “*If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains*” (John 9:41).

INSERT: (Sound effects: the murmuring suddenly returns, continuing through the following conversation)

Aaron: (above the clamoring) This . . . this is an outrage!

Jesus: (above the clamoring) *“I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way is a thief and a robber (John 10:1).*

Aaron: (above the clamoring) You . . . how dare You!

INSERT: (Sound effects: the murmuring rises to a roar)

Jesus: (above the clamoring) *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).*

INSERT: (Sound effects: the sound of the roaring crowd slowly fades)

(Music: swells to indicate scene change; then fades to soft underscoring)

Scene 3

INSERT: (Sound effects: nighttime; a soft breeze and crickets chirping in the background; we again hear the softly crackling campfire)

Thomas: (softly) Jesus, may I ask You another question?

Jesus: Certainly, Thomas.

Thomas: What will happen to the man You healed yesterday? He seemed so happy to have his vision restored, but . . .

Jesus: You are concerned about him.

Thomas: Yes, I am. He has been expelled from the synagogue; the religious leaders will no longer acknowledge his existence; the people of the city will

shun him; and his own family will disown him in order to avoid the same treatment.

INSERT: (Sound effects: Thomas pauses, and we hear nothing but the background noises for a moment)

Thomas: Jesus, how is the man better off than he was when he was blind?

Jesus: Lacking the ability to see was not his greatest handicap, Thomas. He had a much deeper problem, a worse form of blindness to be overcome.

Thomas: You spoke of this blindness with the young Pharisee today.

Jesus: Yes. Spiritual blindness. The inability to see what God is doing, right before your very eyes. Tell me, Thomas; late this afternoon when we left this man who can now see, and yet has seemingly lost everything else, did you see a man struggling with despair and regret?

Thomas: Well . . . no.

Jesus: How did he seem to you? Would you say that he seemed joyful?

Thomas: Well, yes; as a matter of fact he did. The poor man must not comprehend the trouble headed his way.

(Music: underscoring music begins softly as Jesus speaks)

Jesus: Oh, I think you underestimate him, Thomas. I think he knows exactly what he faces.

Thomas: Then why does he appear to be so happy?

Jesus: The reason he is so happy is not because of freedom from difficulties, or even freedom from blindness; the happiness you witnessed, this joy of his, springs from a newfound freedom from **sin**. Yesterday he was lost – living in darkness and alienated from God by his own sins. His physical blindness had nothing to do with that. Today, however, having received his sight, he has also come to the true light by faith in the Son of Man. So you see, he is no longer lost, Thomas, and that is more important to him even than his new vision.

(Music: underscoring music swells; then begins reprise of Theme music; softly underscoring comments of Program Host during Our Response to God’s Word)

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD

Program Host

Like the man who was blind from birth, many of us face difficulties and hardships that are difficult to bear; and like that man, most of us are not even aware of the most pressing hardship that we all face: the burden of our own sin that we cannot escape and cannot overcome on our own.

But here is the good news: God has made a way that our sins can be forgiven. That way is through His Living Word, Jesus. God sent Jesus from heaven to earth to be our Savior. The apostle Paul declared, “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (1 Tim. 1:15).

Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. Jesus grew up and lived a perfect, sinless life. The Word of God says: “*For there is one God and one mediator between*

God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men”

(1 Tim. 2:5). It is through Jesus that we can have forgiveness of our sins.

I'm going to pray a brief prayer from my heart to God. Listen to my prayer, and then when I have prayed I will lead you to pray the same prayer.

Dear God, I thank You that You have made a way for my sins to be forgiven. Thank You for sending Your Living Word, Jesus, to be my Savior. Thank You that He lived a perfect life. Thank You that He gave Himself for me. I want to know more about how my sins can be forgiven. Amen.

Now repeat the prayer aloud after me. We will pray it a portion at a time. Make the prayer your very own to God. Mean it with all your heart as you pray.

Dear God, (pause for person to repeat)

I thank You that You have made a way for my sins to be forgiven. (pause for person to repeat)

Thank You for sending Your Living Word, Jesus, to be my Savior. (pause for person to repeat)

Thank You that He lived a perfect life. (pause for person to repeat)

Thank You that He gave Himself for me. (pause for person to repeat)

I want to know more about how my sins can be forgiven. (pause for person to repeat)

Amen. (pause for person to repeat)

Thank you for praying that prayer. In the next program we will learn more about how our sins can be forgiven.

(Music: Theme music swells dramatically and fades as broadcast ends)

Note to Broadcaster, Program Host, and Director

If this drama is to be broadcast as a part of the “Hard Questions About God” series, there should be a “listener tag” at the end of the broadcast, indicating that the next episode will be another drama on a hard question about God.

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