

# Self-Inflicted Suffering

**Introduction.** Suffering is common to the human race. It is a part of life. Because we are humans, we are apt to suffer pain in different ways. For example, there is kind of suffering peculiar to God's people (Matthew 5:10-12; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:16). Christians pay for the stands they take against evil and wickedness (Ephesians 6:13). Also, suffering is caused by the bad choices of other human beings. God is no respecter of persons so an innocent person may be killed or crippled in a wreck involving a drunken driver (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; cp. Ecclesiastes 9:11). In time of war, many are killed because of the evil decisions of a few.

But aside from these is a type of suffering that is totally unnecessary. It is self-inflicted (1 Peter 4:15). Suffering as a Christian is necessary. Suffering because of others cannot be helped. But self-inflicted suffering could be avoided if we would make better choices, wiser decisions, and not act too hastily. So let's see how we bring on our own suffering and how to avoid it.

## ***I. My Pride***

- A. Pride is one of the sins God hates (Proverbs 6:17; 16:5). We may arrogantly think ourselves to be something, but God will bring us down (Luke 14:7-11).
- B. We will save ourselves a lot of unnecessary suffering if we walk humbly before God (Proverbs 16:18; Daniel 4:37; Zephaniah 2:3; James 4:6).

## ***II. My Tongue***

- A. How many times have you said something in haste and regretted it (1 Peter 3:10)? Think of all the heartache an uncontrolled tongue has caused.
- B. We heap a lot of pain on ourselves when we fail to heed James 1:19. There is a reason James called it a "fire" (James 3:5-6). If you cannot control it, you will suffer (Proverbs 17:20)!

## ***III. My Ignorance***

- A. God's people were destroyed for a lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:1-7). What would happen as a result of their failure to know God's Word?
  - 1. Since they had rejected the Word and not realized its great value, they had lost it forever (Amos 8:11-12; cp. Luke 17:22; John 7:34).
  - 2. This was a just and ultimately self-inflicted consequence of disdain for the will of God. The messengers of God had been shunned because the message called for reformation and restoration.
- B. The Bible is the best-selling book in the history of the world, but one wonders if its sales should really be classified under "Books" because many Bibles are mere ornaments for the coffee table, repositories for pictures or pressed flowers, or the location of records of births or other data.
  - 1. Meanwhile, a famine of hearing God's Word has descended on many homes, brought on by an attitude of indifference and ingratitude.
  - 2. Godless living is gaining ground in the U.S. The present generation living in America is able to enjoy itself more than any generation in history. What has resulted is a brave new world which is attempting to tackle life's most serious

issues without the benefit of the timeless and glorious information that only the Bible can provide.

- C. Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees because of their blindness (Matthew 23:17, 19, 24), but their blindness was self-inflicted (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

#### **IV. My Grudge**

- A. Holding a grudge really hurts the grudge holder. It is always an expression of contempt and hatred (Matthew 5:44). Anne Lamott wrote, “Not forgiving is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die.”
- B. The grudge holder condemns; love seeks to better relations between people (Matthew 5:9, 23-24; 18:15-17). Bitterness has to be put away (Ephesians 4:31; 1 John 4:20).

#### **V. My Money**

- A. With covetousness, Paul enumerates two issues in 1 Timothy 6:10: 1) led astray from the faith, and (2) have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. What has the love of money really accomplished in someone’s life? Does it accomplish anything of lasting value?
- B. Unless the love of God rules our hearts we live an empty, hopeless life (John 5:42; cp. Matthew 6:24). Using our material blessings for good is the mark of a converted life (Luke 12:15; 1 John 3:17-18).

#### **VI. My Lust**

- A. Too many Christians have been led astray by lust (Matthew 5:28). They leave their spouse and enter into a second marriage.
- B. They think they will find happiness in this kind of relationship, and no wonder, for Hollywood glorifies them at every turn.
  - 1. Herodias was angered by God’s Word (Mark 6:16-19), and wanted to kill the messenger. Sadly, the messenger is long dead but his message lives on.
  - 2. How many people in unscriptural marriages are tormented by John’s words? How many people in second marriages will never be happy because of what they did to the wife or husband in their first marriage?
- C. The much better alternative is to work with the one to whom you are bound (Romans 7:3-4). Men, God put you in charge (1 Corinthians 11:3), so it is your task to make sure your marriage is healthy (Proverbs 5:18-19; Ephesians 5:25, 28). It is also your job to have mastery over yourself (1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4).

**Conclusion.** When we live out of harmony with the Bible we bring on ourselves a lot of unnecessary pain (Proverbs 13:15; cp. 1 Peter 4:16). All or any of these can lead to apostasy. When one wanders away from God (Luke 15:11-16), they need to come back. What do you do to yourself by not obeying the gospel? You deny yourself the free gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23).