

## Suffering and Intimacy with God

When Jelena married Greg, she was hoping to get a “happily-ever-after” life. After their first baby and many sleepless nights, she was ready for a refund! Little did she know that things would get tougher; not easier. Between political turmoil, sickness, disability, and disappointments, she was broken. Jelena’s story illustrates how pain and suffering in life is like a jackhammer, a sand blasting machine that strips away our fear, anxiety, self-centeredness, complaining, and apathy toward others who hurt. God allows affliction to rip all of that away so that we can see the world through the eyes of Christ. To know God better, we must know our suffering better, and only in our own total surrender can we discover God’s purposes in life’s most painful circumstances.

**Jelena Sivulka** was born and raised in Serbia, where she got her master’s degree in psychology and in theology. She became a Christian 25 years ago and a few years later got involved in ministry with her husband Greg, planting churches, distributing humanitarian aid, and partnering with Joni and Friends, serving people with disabilities. Jelena has also worked as a counsellor in Serbia’s schools and a social worker, and she is currently working as therapist in a medical clinic. She is the Founder and Director of the non-profit organisation Hana's Hope. She has been blessed with three children: Benjamin, Sara, and Hana, who has autism.

### I. Introduction

#### A. Categories of suffering

1. Physical
2. Spiritual
3. Emotional
4. Social/cultural

### II. Bible and suffering

#### A. Job, The Victor over suffering

#### B. Jesus, Our Model for suffering

#### C. God’s plan for us to suffer

### III. Problem of suffering

A. Suffering changes our picture of the World

B. Suffering changes the picture of God

1. God that cares
2. God that loves
3. God that is in control

C. Suffering changes our identity

1. Victim vs. Victor

“God whispers to us in our pleasures,  
speaks to us in our conscience,  
but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world. “ C.S.Lewis

### IV. Silver line of suffering

A. Suffering brings people to repentance

B. Suffering cultivates brokenness and dependence on God

C. Suffering transforms us in to Christ likeness

D. Suffering teaches us compassion for others

E. Suffering gives us an Eternal perspective

### V. When pain entered my life

A. Importance of mourning

B. Story worth telling

Dr.Rick Langer, Importance of narration

C. Virtue of being still, Ps.46:10

D. Joy of seeing God through our pain, Job 42:5

## VI. Conclusion

“One day very soon, much sooner than we think, God will close the curtain on sin, sweeping suffering and all its pain and tears away forever. Until that time, He permits what He hates to accomplish something mysterious and wonderful which He loves: Christ in us.”

Joni E.T.

### ***Suggested Readings:***

*Solomon, Lon, Brokenness, San Francisco: Purple Pomegranate Publications, 2006.*

*Sittser, Jerry, A Grace Disguised, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004.*

*Nouwen, Henry J.M., Can you drink this Cup?, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2006.*

*Tada, Earickson J. & Estes, Steven, When God weeps, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997.*

*Tada, Earickson J. & Bundy, Steve, Beyond suffering, Aqoura Hills: Christian Institution on Disability, 2011.*