



# THE BEREIA PAGE

*“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11*

## A Review of Purpose

With the beginning of vol. 4, a review of the aim and focus of *The Berea Page* seems appropriate (see [Vol 1, No 1](#)).

The title being adapted from Acts 17.11, I want to encourage Berea-like scrutiny of the Scriptures and claims of the faith in line with the NT's call to test what we hear and believe (cf. 1 Thess 5.21; 1 John 4.1).

Although that opens the door to a wide range of topic possibilities, my focus here is generally limited to matters related to [1] the case for Christ and his way (cf. Acts 9.2; 19.9, 23; 24.14, 22); [2] faithfully dealing with trials and suffering; and [3] the relationship of faith and truth. In addition, I stimulate thought about challenges to belief posed by our culture, typically the focus of the sidebar quotations.

As I project the initial issues in volume 4, I plan to first feature some reflections on trials and suffering and then turn to an important question modern apologists must address about the NT text itself.

My hope always is that *The Berea Page* will stimulate thinking and be useful for kingdom work. Feedback is always welcome ([email](#) address below) and sharing these writings with others always appreciated.

~ David

## To Be Like Job

David Anguish

On Friday morning, May 17, 1996, my 38-year-old sister got out of bed, collapsed, and died from an aortic aneurysm. Jan left behind my brother-in-law, a daughter, 10, and a son, 7.

On Friday, June 30, 2017, we learned my wife, Carlynn, had stage 4 kidney cancer. She died Saturday, September 16, just 2½ months later, 18 days before her 61st birthday and 3½ months before our 40th wedding anniversary.

As you might expect, both losses prompted some “why” questions. I’ve taken note of things I suspect might partially explain some of the whys, but don’t have enough evidence to be sure.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the prophets who were given answers to some of their questions, I have not received a specific revelation from God. So, I don’t—and may never—know.

Can I live with that? Many struggle with that idea. Surely, “there must be a logical explanation” (some presume to say what it must be!). Believing God is the source and standard of all that is reasonable, I see that as a sensible statement. But that doesn’t mean I’ll know the answer or why it’s reasonable. Unless he reveals them, God’s thoughts are not mine. Since they are his, even if revealed, they may exceed my ability to comprehend (Isa 55.8-9; Rom 11.33-36; 1 Cor 2.6-13).

Can I live with that? Just accept that, sometimes, bad things happen? That life comes without a warranty? That, as my mother once told me her grandmother used to say, “The old will die; sometimes, the young do, too”? Or even that God has reasons he doesn’t share (cf. Deut 29.29)?

Biblically speaking, it’s permissible to ask why. We read of several people who did so without reprimand. There was Habakkuk, dismayed about the problem of Judah’s sin and then more distressed about God’s solution (Hab 1.2-17).

There was Abraham who, upon learning God intended to destroy Lot’s town (Gen 18.22-33), wondered aloud about the nature of the God he served. “Far be it from you . . . to put the

## Questioning Motives

“Satan’s implied accusation [Job 1] is an accusation against all believers. It says that when we serve and love, we serve God for the rewards. Satan asserts that the basis of faith is profit or personal gain. As long as believers are prosperous, healthy, and happy, they will serve God. But let God permit some evil, permit the loss of a family member or the loss of a job, then believers will lose hope in him and reject him. Faith only exists when it is profitable. Believers are only faithful when they are happy.” ~ John Mark Hicks, *Yet Will I Trust Him: Understanding God in a Suffering World* (College Press Pub. Co., 1999), 87

## God or Futility

“Paul’s implication [Rom 1.21] is plain: where life is not experienced as a gift from God it has lost touch with reality and condemns itself as futility ... [Thus] man’s whole ability to respond and function not least as a rational being has been damaged; without the illumination and orientation which comes from the proper recognition of God his whole center is operating in the dark, lacking direction and dissipating itself in what are essentially trifles.” - James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary 38A (Word Books, Publisher, 1988), 60

## Familiarity Blindness

“Familiarity has blinded many people to the outrageousness of Christ’s claim and traditional reverence inhibits them from properly assessing it. If He did not in fact rise, His claim was false, and He was a very dangerous personality indeed.” ~ J. B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small* (Macmillan, 1961), 113

righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?*” (v. 25; emphasis mine).

There was Paul who “was given” a “thorn in the flesh” to keep him from “being conceited” by the revelations he had received. When he “pleaded” for relief, God said, “My grace is sufficient for you,...” (2 Cor 12.7-10). He apparently knew only the reason for his thorn, not why God wouldn’t remove it. But he trusted God to work for his ultimate good (Rom 8.28).

Finally, there was Job. The man whose suffering was the test case that came out of a Heavenly Council Meeting. Who had it all—and lost it in a day. Whose wife told him to give up, curse God, and die. Whose friends came to comfort and stayed to prosecute. Throughout his ordeal Job endured (Jas 5.11), kept declaring his innocence, and asked for a chance to “argue [his] case with God” (Job 13.3), hoping to learn why.

At the end of the day, God’s “anger burn[ed]” toward the friends from whom he demanded accountability, but he said Job had spoken rightly (42.7-8). God had responded, but not as Job wanted, inundating him with *questions*, but giving him *no answers* (Job 38-41). We who read it know, but within the drama of the book, Job never learned why he was afflicted.

Could Job live with that? Yes. He received something better: a bigger view of God and therefore a deeper faith. “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and am comforted in dust and ashes” (Job 42.5-6; v. 6 as translated in the ESV footnote).<sup>2</sup>

Why did Jan die when she did? Why did Carlynn suffer from cancer and die so soon? Why did this or that happen to you? And on it goes. I don’t know the answers, but am convinced that, when we ask such questions in faith, we are like Job who also didn’t know why. Hopefully, they will lead us to a growing knowledge of God that is also like his.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In the latter case, I have had some understandings reinforced by the experience. See my article, “Hear My Cry, Oh God,” *Abundant Living* 14:2 (Winter 2020), 26-28. Read a summary [here](#) or download the entire article [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew *naham* (נָחַם), usually translated “repent” in 42.6 (KJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, et al.), appears seven times in Job (2.11; 7.13; 16.2; 21.34; 29.25; 42.6, 11), but only in 42.6 does the ESV translate it “repent.” Elsewhere—including five verses later in 42.11—it is translated “comfort,” a translation also found in some Jewish sources in 42.6. Also, God said Job’s comforters (16.2) had “not spoken of me what is right” (42.7). These are among the factors in favor of translating “comfort” in 42.6. For a study and defense of this view, see my “Job’s Mind Consoled: A Study of Job’s ‘Repentance’ (Job 42:6),” on my [website](#).

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