

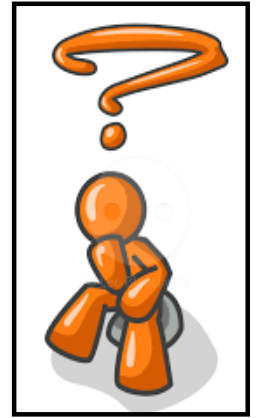
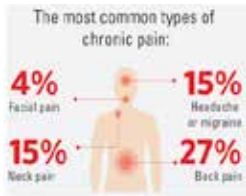
What About ...

Chronic Pain

By Dave DeWitt

Definition

According to the Cleveland Clinic, **chronic pain is pain that lasts more than six months** (my.clevelandclinic.org). More than one third of Americans (116 million) suffer from chronic pain (apcnopain.com). Modern medicine has made progress toward treating chronic pain, but there are some levels of pain that have yet to be conquered, and even when they are, there is often a tradeoff of impairment caused by the medication. [Percent graph is from healthblog.uofmhealth.org. Age graph from uspharmacist.com.]



Wrong Conclusion About God and Chronic Pain

Here are some bad comments made by well-meaning Christians (references intentionally omitted):

- **Comment:** “Many times God brings good from our chronic pain by teaching us to rely more on Him. ... God may use chronic pain to help us learn endurance and patience.”

My Answer: Outside of what is written in Scripture, we have no authority to make guesses about what God is doing or may be doing. It is always a mistake to try to figure out what God is doing in our lives, especially through our pain and suffering. This is especially taught in the books of Job and Ecclesiastes.

- **Comment:** “The more acutely we see our need, the more likely we are to seek His face.”

My Answer: Not necessarily. It was certainly not true for Job. It’s understanding the character of God, which comes from the Bible, not our circumstances, that brings us to “seek His face.”

- **Comment:** “We then can help other sufferers with what God taught us” from our chronic pain.

My Answer: We should always help suffering believers with their pain (1 Corinthians 1:3-4), but that does not mean we should see the ability to help others as a reason for our pain.

What the Bible Says About Chronic Pain

1. Since God is sovereign over everything, we should not just say “God allowed our pain” but that our pain is in His sovereign plan, and His sovereign plan is good. **Romans 8:28** *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose* (see also 2 Corinthians 11:23-27).
2. We should never think we could know why God is putting our chronic pain in His plan. **Ecclesiastes 3:11** *He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so*

that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end (see also Job 38).

3. Faithfully enduring chronic pain, in a godly manner, results in heavenly rewards. **Matthew 5:4** *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted* (see also Matthew 5:11-12, 16; Luke 16:25; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:6-8).
4. God does not promise to eliminate our earthly pain (2 Corinthians 12:9), but He does promise peace. **Philippians 4:6-7** *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (see also Psalm 34:19-22).
5. Chronic pain is part of the curse on nature. It’s part of the fall due to Adam’s sin. A holy, just God cannot overlook sin, and we live in the midst of His judgment. But He has also provided a path through the blood of Jesus Christ to an eternal destiny without suffering (Romans 8:5-19; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21).
6. Revelation 21:4 *and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.*

