

This book benefits lay people who need encouragement that God has not and will not abandon them. It challenges every believer to embrace pain and suffering for a higher cause: God's refining fire in our lives. For those who desire to serve God through everyday life, whatever their occupation, it could be used as a model to follow. It is an example of a faithful person taking every opportunity to do good in her life.

One cannot help but be inspired and encouraged by Ortberg's plethora of examples of faith-filled life. From praying over a sleeping child to walk with God after taking her first steps, to her own childhood struggle of divorced parents, to being tested for MS as a child, to a college sweetheart break up, and the fear of infertility, this is a testimony of a sincere follower of Jesus. Ortberg allows the reader to walk with her on her own journey of faith, and as she comforts parents who have lost children, counsels couples who have miscarried, visits with dear friends in their last days of fighting cancer. Ortberg describes a range of suffering as she ministers to her and her husband's congregants at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in northern California, giving us a worthy model of ministry to follow.

Ortberg's book is well written and delightful. It's refreshing to hear self-awareness and to see such transparency in a church leader in our day.

Reviewed by Mimi Agers

Mimi serves in south eastern Beirut among women and children in the National Alliance Denomination.

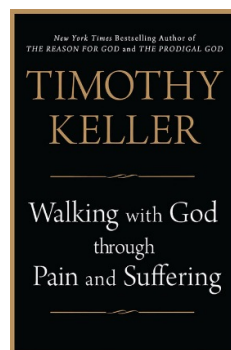
Walking with God through Pain and Suffering

by Tim Keller

Penguin Books, 2015. 384 pages. ISBN: 978-1594634406.

Reading books by authors who will challenge your faith and spark curiosity to learn more is important for any believer. It is especially important for those of us who are serving in the mission field. Isolation from others, not by choice, is something that most of us have experienced as we often we do not have others to turn to when we go through difficult times.

In this book author Tim Keller focuses on those difficult times. He addresses all audiences, including those who want to have a discussion of the age-old question of the problem of evil. First, he looks at the phenomenon of human suffering and the myriad of ways other cultures and religions



have sought to understand it. Then, the second part of the book discusses what Scripture says about suffering, and Keller takes the reader from the philosophical to the personal. The third and final part of the book provides a practical discussion particularly applicable to those who are in the midst of suffering. Most books written on this matter are intended at reaching only one audience, with one particular bent or viewpoint. Keller tries to integrate all three audiences, thus creating an almost-conversation-like approach to this very complex and often confusing subject.

Anyone who has read a Keller book will know that his books are not always easy to read. I am an avid reader, often eager to get through multiple books at one time. When I agreed to review this book I knew it would take much thought and might push me out of my comfort zone. After all, who wants to talk about suffering? Those of us from the west can agree that our society gives us little explanation of or capacity to deal with suffering. Rather, we're told we must protect ourselves from it and try to avoid it all costs.

I too am a sufferer. I grew up part of a minority, subject to racism in school my whole life. With my husband and four children I have served eighteen years in East Asia in a restricted access country. As I write, I think about my husband's upcoming CAT scan. They happen every six months. His type of cancer is rare. Watching someone you love deal with cancer, the effects of cancer, and the fear of it returning can be like a cancer of the soul, a quiet, heavy burden that will never go away. We now live in Thailand where we can continue our work and have access to proper medical care. I have read many books on suffering during this three-year journey, many of which I will never read again. Keller approaches this as a fellow-sufferer and theologian. His writing is not definitive or linear. He writes with solid biblical understanding and joins the throngs of Christian pilgrims through the ages who have sought to understand this matter. Perhaps the most powerful thing about Keller's book is his use of stories. He includes a story of a fellow-sufferer at the end of nearly every chapter. I found myself drawn to these stories, eager to know how others who have suffered like myself are meeting Jesus in their pain.

Keller nails it in the beginning of the book when he states that 'Human life is fatally fragile and subject to forces beyond our power to manage. Life is tragic'. This is so true. We forget this living in a world that seeks to control everything. The more we know, the more easily we succumb to fear. People can either find God in their pain and suffering, or not. It's not a given that everyone will find God or be changed through it. The central image in this book is the fiery furnace. Keller asks, how do we actually walk with God in such times? Every chapter of the book outlines one strategy for connecting with God while in the furnace of pain and suffering.

Is the book useful? Yes. I highlighted my way through it and I will go over it again. How do I walk with God in such difficult times? God himself is with us in our furnace, and we know that we will not be consumed. Keller says, ‘Nothing is more important than to learn how to maintain a life of purpose in the midst of painful adversity’. I could not agree more.

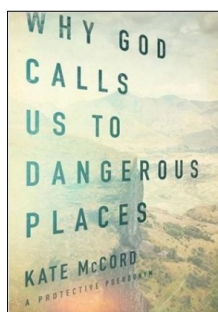
Reviewed by J.C.

J.C. has been with her mission organization for twenty years. She and her husband serve as regional leaders in East Asia. She is learning to walk with the Lord through pain and suffering, seeking to find God even in the darkness. She loves walking with others as they do the same.

Why God Calls Us to Dangerous Places

by Kate McCord

Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015. 224 pages. ISBN: 978-0802413413.



Kate McCord is well-qualified to address the question of why God does indeed call his children to be his representative in dangerous places. From 2005 to 2010 she lived in Afghanistan as a humanitarian aid worker after the fall of the Taliban—years that were ‘hard, beautiful, glorious, terrifying’ which she ‘wouldn’t trade ... for anything in the world.’³

In the first chapter the author drops the reader into the immediate hard core reality of threats, terrorist acts, and other stress-filled incidents that can be part and parcel of living life in dangerous places. She writes for various audiences: to parents whose children choose to follow God’s call (whether it is overseas or on one’s home soil), to the overseas workers themselves who are on what is traditionally considered the front-lines and to the caring communities who send these workers out to bring the power of the gospel to those who have not yet heard of Jesus.

In chapter two, the author tells her personal story of God’s call. She addresses the usual questions: the choices that need to be made, reactions, doubts, struggles and fears that are not only her own, but also of those involved in sending her out to minister in Afghanistan.

McCord goes on to speak of the reality of both loving and hating the country and people that workers are called to in the third chapter. She speaks of frustrations

³ Quoted from the website: <https://storytellerkm.com/kates-story/kate-mccord-afghanistan/>