

THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN SUFFERING

By

John N. Clayton



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This booklet is a written copy of a part of a series of lessons presented in the **Does God Exist?** lecture series by John Clayton. At the urging of many people, we have put it into booklet form — hoping that it may be helpful to someone whose faith is quivering in the wind of stress.

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And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:1–3).

One of the great problems and one of the great mysteries of life is the problem of human suffering and the problem of death. I suppose there is more pain and suffering today than there ever has been on the face of the earth—if for no other reason than the fact that there are more people than ever before. Not only is there more physical pain, but there is also more emotional and mental pain than there has ever been. Almost every time that I am involved in a lectureship on a college campus or a similar place I have people—young people usually—who will come to me and say, “Well all right, you’ve shown us that there is some evidence for God’s existence, but if there is a God and if He is a loving and merciful God, how do you explain the problems of suffering and death and all the tragedies that happen to people?” Why is it that these things occur? I believe any question that man can ask has a reasonable answer—at least an answer that is as consistent with God’s existence as it is in opposition to God’s existence. And so, in the problem of human suffering and the problem of death and tragedies—things that happen to all of us—there are answers. It is not going to be possible in this booklet to give an answer to every conceivable situation that one might conjecture could occur or has occurred. But there are some things that can be said and some points that can be made that are useful and helpful in better understanding the problem of human suffering and in demonstrating that these things are not inconsistent with a loving and merciful God, such as the God we read of in the Bible.

There are some things that are obvious enough and that are simple enough to understand, that there is no need to go into great detail. So, I just want to mention them very briefly.

For instance, there are those who say there is no such thing as pain. There is a school of thought that says that pain does not really exist, that it is all in your mind, that if you experience pain,

it is because you are weak or because you are not properly oriented psychologically or because you are not spiritual enough or whatever it might be—that pain is an illusion. But I doubt very sincerely if too many of us take this point of view seriously. Medically we know that the brain makes responses to a pin prick in the finger. There are very few of us that when we stick ourselves with a pin or cut ourselves do not thoroughly and completely believe that pain is real, and so I do not intend to go into this in great detail.

Although there are many things that could be said, I do not think it is necessary for us to get involved in long and protracted discussions about the things that we experience as far as pain and suffering go as a result of our own deliberate sin. In short, if you jump off a bridge you should not get too upset with God when you hit the bottom. We have examples of this in the Bible: Saul, David, Cain, Adam and Eve—individuals who suffered because of their transgressions of what God has said to do and what not to do. Certainly, in today's world we see this. The people who drink alcoholic beverages can expect to have problems getting their brains to function properly in old age. They are people who can expect to have problems with liver cirrhosis and things of this kind. They can expect to have difficulties that are a result of having taken this material, this poisonous intoxicant material, into their bodies. People who smoke can expect to have problems with their lungs (emphysema, lung cancer, things of this type). The person who commits adultery can expect the consequences of that—the psychological damage, and disappointment. The person who drives too fast, uses drugs, or lies—is involved in things that naturally precipitate problems for us and they fall in the category of jumping off the bridge. I believe that if we abuse ourselves, we cannot be angry with our Creator for not stepping in and helping us avoid the consequences of these things. It would be unreasonable to expect God to stop us from hitting the bottom when we jump off a bridge. And so if we persist in taking chemicals into our body, in doing things that are contradictory to what God has told us to do, we can expect to suffer. I do not believe that it is inconsistent with the nature of God for a man to expect to suffer when he tampers with nature or when he fails to heed the situations that occur when our natural situation is abused.

When man was put upon the earth he was told to be fruitful, to replenish the earth, to subdue it. His first responsibility upon the earth (his only responsibility when he was first here) was to “care for the garden,” to take care of the earth, to make sure that the earth was properly nurtured and properly supervised. The essence of that

command still exists. Man still has the responsibility to take care of this beautiful creation that God has given us. Much of the suffering and tragedy man experiences is because he has not discharged this responsibility.

Man's persistence in polluting the water, for example, has caused disease and other problems which in some cases have been tragic. Man's unwise use of the land has caused floods and tornadoes that have brought great tragedy and great suffering upon man. When we violate the natural environment that God has given us, we cannot expect God not to allow the consequences of this violation to occur. We know that emphysema and some of the other diseases that we have come in contact with have been caused, at least in some cases, by our violation of the air that God has given us originally in a state that did not cause these things. We have evidence that even leukemia may be related to man's indiscriminate use of nuclear energy.

Another aspect of the problem of suffering is seen when we fail to heed the warnings of nature and thus reap the consequences. I think there are many classic illustrations of this. In California, for example, there is an area near Los Angeles where the earth is under great stress, and where there are a tremendous number of cracks, or faults as they are called. Geologists have warned the builders in that area that this is a place where they need to be extremely careful not to construct tall buildings and that they should not build structures that are sensitive to earthquakes and to cracks and shifting of the earth. Yet there was a building constructed to replace a hospital that was knocked down by an earthquake earlier. This building was to be sixteen stories tall and had no earthquake provisions of any real consequence in it. It was being partially financed by the federal government, and was straddling the very fault that knocked down the hospital that it was replacing. Now I would like you to think for a minute, who will get the blame when an earthquake rolls through that area, knocking down the brand new hospital and perhaps killing millions of people, including everybody in the hospital? Well, I will guarantee you that there will be those people who will say, "If there was a God that wouldn't have happened." And yet the warning is there. If you build your house in the mouth of a volcano, it does not seem to me that you have too much to complain about when it erupts. A surprising amount of the problems we have fall into these categories that we have briefly examined.

But on the other hand I opened this discussion by reading to you a passage from the ninth chapter of John, which describes a situation

that does not fall in this category. Jesus was passing by, the Bible tells us in John 9:1–3, and He saw a man who was blind from his birth, born without sight. Now His disciples asked Him the typical question. They said, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” It was their conviction that the problems that the man had were a result of man’s sin, which in some cases is correct. But notice what Jesus said in the third verse: “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” Jesus said it was not because this man sinned or not even because his parents sinned that he was born blind. It was not sin that did it. It was not that this man abused his body; it was not that this man abused his environment; it was not that this man failed to heed the warnings of his environment. Jesus said it was that the works of God should be made manifest in him. Before we conclude I want to explain to you what I think that means.

First let us take a look at a few points that are related to this type of problem, at least in an indirect way. Let us see if we can make some sense of some of the things that you and I experience: some of the things that come our way in life that we sometimes find somewhat difficult to explain, or somewhat difficult to rationalize, or to work out in our own minds. There are some, for example, who suggest to us that pain is something that should not occur if there is a God. And yet, physical pain and other types of pain are absolutely necessary if we are to survive in a physical way. There was a story in *Reader’s Digest* about a little boy in India who was born without the nerve endings of the extremities of his body connected to his brain. In simple terms, this child could not experience physical pain. Now you know, we might think that would be marvelous never to have a stubbed toe, a headache, a backache, or all the other aches and pains that bother all of us. But this is a very tragic, unpleasant story. This little boy was about 10 or 11 months old, just beginning to walk around hanging onto things, when his mother was kneading bread over on the counter and smelled the odor of burning human flesh. She turned and saw her little boy with his hands on the hot furnace in the center of the room, and the doctors were just barely able to save his hands by skin grafting. You see, that child could not know that the furnace was hot, and the natural reflex built into each of us was not operative in this child. Consequently he was not protected by experiencing normal pain. Any normal child would probably have never touched the thing, and if he had he would have jerked away immediately. He would have experienced pain. He would have screamed and would have gotten help immediately without a serious burn. But this child did not have that protection. A few months later

the child came in one day and collapsed in the doorway of the hut, and when the mother picked him up she noticed his foot was badly cut and he had an obvious loss of blood. Once again his life was saved by transfusions but you see his body could not say to his brain, “You’ve been hurt! Get help! You need attention quickly.” We need physical pain. The tragic end of the story came when the child was barely eight years old. He came in one day and laid down on the mat in the corner of the hut as is the custom in that country. The mother went over to check on him a few minutes later and found he was dead. An autopsy revealed he had died of a ruptured appendix. You see his body could not say to his brain, “You’re sick. You need help. You’re in trouble.” Consequently, survival was not possible.

The writer says in Psalm 139:14, “I will praise thee for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvelous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well.” Indeed this physical body that I live in, ugly as it may be on the outside, is a marvelous machine—and if properly cared for might run as long as a hundred years without a valve job or a new transmission or even a change in oil. (Some of us may sometimes feel like we need a new transmission, but the fact of the matter is that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.) Physical pain is a part of being fearfully and wonderfully made; physical pain is that which protects us and enables us to survive in the environment in which we live.

I would like to suggest to you further that this same type of thing is true in the emotional sense. What kind of man would it be who could not experience guilt, sympathy, and compassion and who could not relate to the needs of fellow human beings? We have had some famous people who were like this. They wear names like Hitler, Mussolini, and Eichman—men who could watch innocent men, women, and children by the tens of thousands walk to their death in the gas chamber and apparently not be moved. These men apparently were not able to feel sympathy, compassion, or guilt in any way.

If you are a young man dating a young woman who cannot be moved by the saddest of human experiences (if she can watch the saddest movie and a tear does not come to her eye; if she can hear of the greatest plight of human beings and if she can observe the suffering and pain of others and not be moved) you had better think very seriously about what kind of a wife this girl is going to be. Is she going to be able to relate to your needs? Is she going to relate to your feelings? Is she going to have compassion for what you

need in life? And when you fail, is she going to be sympathetic and understanding? Is she going to be a “helpmeet,” or is she going to be “millstone” dragging you down, one who has no capacity to relate to you and to help you when you need help?

Perhaps even a greater need is the reverse direction. If you are a young lady dating a young man and if this young man somehow has the distorted, perverted idea that masculine strength depends on not being sensitive and not being able to relate to the needs of other human beings, you had better think very seriously about what kind of husband this man is going to be. If he can watch the saddest movie and not be moved and if he can watch the greatest tragedy of human life and not be disturbed, you can be sure he is going to be a husband who is totally unable to relate to you in the difficult business of being a woman and the more difficult business of being a mother. Do you really believe he is going to feel for your needs and be sympathetic to your problems? Is he really going to be helpful to you when you need help?

I am convinced that one of the greatest tragedies of our society today is the fact that somehow we have equated the ability to be sympathetic, the ability to be compassionate, the ability to relate to the needs of our fellow human beings as weakness—when, in fact, it is a sign of strength.

Sometime ago, the little girl who lived next door to us went to the shopping center to get some cokes for some friends of hers. She was brutally attacked by a man in the parking lot of that shopping center. Before the evening was finished she had been stabbed 24 times, and she died. Why did no one meet her needs? How could a young lady possibly be stabbed mercilessly for thirty minutes in a New York street with 1,100 young men in the near vicinity and have nobody move to help her? Why is it that we have somehow equated the ability of a man to be sympathetic, to be compassionate, to be helpful, to be understanding, to relate to the needs of his fellow human beings as a sign of weakness? I would suggest to you that any third-grade weakling can turn his back on the needs of those who are suffering and who need help. Anybody can refuse to help and refuse to relate to the needs of others. A man of strength is a man who can stand above a cold impersonal city and with tears in his eyes say, “Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chicks under her wings, and ye would not!” There is a Man of strength; there is a Man

who was not afraid to get involved; there is a Man who paid with His life for His ability to relate to the needs of other people; and there was the Son of God—Jesus Christ! We need to get over this idea that somehow the man who can do this—the man who can be sympathetic and compassionate, who can move into people’s lives and try to help them—is a weak man. In fact, just the opposite is true.

I am also convinced that one of our great problems in this area of pain and suffering and death is brought on by ignorance. And I suppose that this is true of death more than anything else. Ignorance has caused us to throw away one of the great blessings that we have in being a Christian. My little girl taught me a great lesson in this area when she was five years old. We had a little puppy that had grown up with our children. One day the little puppy was attacked viciously in our garage by three very large dogs and was badly injured. When I came home from work I found my children gathered around a blood-soaked blanket with the dog inside it. I took the dog to the veterinarian knowing full well that there was very little hope for her survival, and in fact, there was none. As I went back home, I kept wondering what I was going to say to my children. How was I going to explain to them that this little puppy that they had grown up with and that they loved, was no longer alive? I came into the living room and sat down, and with tears coming from my own eyes I said to my children, “I have some bad news for you, children. Susie is no longer alive. She’s dead.” Cathy, the little five year old looked up at me and said, “Well, Daddy, I’m so glad.” And she smiled. I said, “Cathy, honey, you don’t understand. You’re never going to see Susie again. Susie is dead.” Cathy looked at me and said, “Well, Daddy, I didn’t want to see Susie go on suffering like that.” You talk about feeling an inch high! I realized that my five year old had a better hold on some aspects of death than I did.

In fact, is it not a marvelous thing that when those we love are no longer able to exist realistically in a physical way that they do not have to go on suffering? God has provided a means by which the spirit can be separated from the body and the physical pain that we endure now fades into insignificance. It is interesting to me that the apostles rarely used the term death to describe the end of life. They talked about being “asleep in Jesus,” about being “absent from the body,” about being “at home with God,” and so forth. I have known people who when they lost a husband or a wife, a mother or a father, a child, a brother or a sister, have somehow seemed to quit living themselves. They atrophy and are no longer able to be happy,

useful, and productive. This is a great tragedy. I pointed out in one of my other lectures that as a Christian we ought to be able to look at life much more positively because of death. As an atheist, as a disbeliever, as one alienated from God, a person has to look at life with all of its problems, with all of its suffering, with all of the pain, with all of the terrible things that one has to endure as the absolute best that he is ever going to experience. And yet, if we are wearing Christ, if we are a part of Jesus, we can look at life with all of its joy, with all of its beauty, with all of the wonderful things that we all enjoy as the absolute worst that we are ever going to have to endure. Can we not see that the difference is as different as left and right, as black and white, as night and day? If there was no other reason for us to believe in God but this one, it would be a compelling reason. Ignorance is one of the great curses of man. Ignorance of death is one of the great curses of the Christian.

I am sure all of you have heard lessons from one time or another of the value of pain and suffering in people's lives. I think that it would be important for us here to make just a comment along these lines, even though it is a point you have undoubtedly heard. I think perhaps the best illustration that I have heard is a very old story but one that illustrates the point very well. There were five brothers out west somewhere who at one time had attended the services of the Church, but had become indifferent because of lack of involvement. They were not in attendance, not faithful, and were completely inactive. The story goes that at one time the oldest brother, John, was out behind the barn and he got bit on the arm by a rattlesnake. Of course the other brothers were greatly concerned. They called the elders and the preacher and anybody else they could get to pray for John. They made all kinds of promises of the things they were going to do. It was not too long until John began to recover. As he recovered, he reflected upon his condition and his rejection of God and his lack of involvement and the fact that he had not been faithful to the Lord. So he turned away from the kind of life he had been living, and he came back to God. He got involved in the work program of the Church, and became a very active, very dedicated Christian. The story goes that one Sunday the preacher, in the process of a prayer, said, "Lord send us four more rattlesnakes that we may reach John's four brothers."

I am sure that no preacher would want to bring that kind of pain and suffering into a man's life, but the fact of the matter is that sometimes it takes pain, sometimes it takes suffering, sometimes it takes a tragedy to make us realize that we need God. Pain humbles us.

Somebody has said, “Humility is a funny thing. Just when you think you have it, you’ve lost it.” Certainly that is true in 2 Corinthians 12:7 Paul said, “... lest I should be exalted above measure ... , there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.” The apostle Paul apparently had a problem. The pain and suffering (the thorn in the flesh, whatever it was) helped Paul. It helped him overcome any sense of egotism that might have been part of his life. Sometimes it takes a tragedy to make us realize we are not self-sufficient. Sometimes it takes a disease to make us realize that no matter how much money we have, no matter how vocal we are, no matter how many friends we have, no matter what our situation in life might be, that sometimes there is no one who can help us but God. “... Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8).

The last point that I wish to make in our discussion is probably the most important point—a point that I think each of us needs to think about very, very seriously and understand very completely—especially as far as the Christian’s situation connected with pain and suffering is concerned. The point deals most precisely with the passage of Scripture from John 9:1–3 that we read earlier in our discussion. Every now and then, I will discuss this subject with someone who will say, “Well, if God were real and if everything was as you say it is, then certainly Christians following God’s system would not have to experience pain and suffering.” I think if we consider that point of view for a few minutes we see that obviously this is not a realistic position for a number of reasons.

First of all, if becoming a Christian would automatically unravel all the various problems that confront a person in life, then we would have people flocking to religion to get away from their problems. The way it is, there are some people using religion as an escape mechanism when that is not what God intended. God wants us to serve Him because we love Him, not out of fear. It would be unreal and unrealistic for us to really believe that somehow being a Christian ought to exempt us from the problems that other people have to endure.

But I think even far more fundamental and far more important than this is the fact that if Christians did not suffer, they would be totally and completely incapable of doing what they were put here to do. God intends for His followers to communicate with the world, to bring Jesus Christ into the lives of people. You cannot communicate with a man unless you are enduring or have endured some of the

same things that he has endured. As a matter of fact, I believe that the bad experiences that you and I have to put up with and that we all undergo from time to time are actually talents. They are actually things that enable us to communicate with our fellow man and meet his needs. I hope you will pardon this very personal reference but I do not really know any other way to present what I am trying to say here than to show you in my own life what God has done and how things have worked to His glory.

Some years ago my wife and I decided that as a part of service to the Lord we would adopt some children. We wanted to raise these children in a Christian home. We wanted to love them as any parent loves their children, and help them find the happiness and joy that we have found in Christ in our marriage together. We made the proper arrangements, and in a very short period of time, we were allowed to bring home a little boy as our own son. We were very, very happy. We named him Timothy, because I had great dreams for this young man. It was my sincere hope and prayer that this child might develop to be a great gospel preacher like the Timothy I read about in the Bible, that he might be able to do what I knew his daddy would never be able to do because of his background, his lack of training, and his ability. We had this child for about six months when we began to recognize that something was not developing normally in the child.

One day we took the child to a doctor. When the doctor examined the baby he said, "Mr. and Mrs. Clayton, I hate to tell you this, but your child is blind. He can't see. He's got congenital cataracts and not only that, it also appears that there will probably be other difficulties. This child is apparently a rubella child. His mother apparently had German measles (rubella) during the pregnancy and he may have a heart defect. He will probably be retarded. There are a variety of things that could be wrong. As a medical doctor, I must advise you to put this child away in an institution, get another baby, and forget about him." We had had this child for about six months. He was as much our child as any child is anybody's child. You can imagine the kind of impact that this had on a man who had been a Christian a very short time. That night we went out for a drive. While my wife went in to get something at a shopping center, I can remember sitting in the car holding this little baby in my arms, looking into that little face I had grown to love, and saying to God over and over, "Why Lord, why? Why would you do this to me? After I've come out of atheism: After I've sacrificed everything I know to sacrifice. After I've done everything I know to do, why would you do this to me?"

The answer did not come right away. We went through an agonizing period of time. Many people tried to tell us that we ought to institutionalize the child, and sometimes this is necessary. There are times when the best thing for the child, the best thing for the parents, and the best thing for all concerned is to institutionalize a child that has problems that cannot be met satisfactorily in a home situation. But we did not know what this child's situation was. I kept reading passages like John 9, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." I read passages that said that "... all things work together for good to them that love God ..." (Romans 8:28). There had to be a reason for this! There had to be some kind of understanding that I could get that would make me realize why this thing had happened!

We determined that at least until we knew what the child's situation was, we had to stick this thing out. People who did not share our convictions tried to influence us to wash our hands of the situation. We went through numerous surgeries on the baby's eyes, but after many attempts, doctors finally gave up. Tim is totally blind. Later, we found that the child had a mixture of cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy which has been an increasing struggle for all of us, but Tim has achieved a great deal and is a contributing member of our society. I suppose that even during these years when we were going through all of this, I began to recognize some value in what had happened. Certainly, my wife and I were closer as man and wife because we had endured this thing together. We had to support each other and help each other through the problem. By having had this somewhat abnormal situation I am sure that we appreciate our so-called normal children (if any child is normal) a whole lot more.

But the real significance of this passage in John 9 which we have been talking about, and the real significance of what had happened, did not occur to me until a friend in Pontiac, Michigan, wrote me and said, "John, there is a young man and his wife here that have a baby with essentially the same difficulties that your Timmy has and I don't know what to say to them. They are distraught and talking about leaving the Lord. I wondered if you would write them a letter explaining to them what has happened to you, and if you would perhaps help them in some way." I must confess that his letter made me angry. I did not want to do it. I stuck the letter in the desk and had no intention of writing anything to anybody about a situation like this. But I guess my conscience bothered me, and I did not want him writing me another letter. Finally one night I sat down with the intent of writing a sentence or two to these people to get my

responsibility over with. I wrote a sentence or two, and then I wrote another paragraph, and then another page, and another page. I do not really remember how many pages I wrote, but I wrote them an extremely long letter—almost a small book. You see, I could say to these people, “Now look, I know what you are going through because I’ve been over that road.” Most of you have not had that experience. I hope you never do. It is a terrible thing to look at a child that you have planned great things for, that you love very much, and realize that nothing that you had dreamed about can really come true. It is a terrible thing, but it is something that I have been through and I could say to this young man and this young woman, “I know how you feel. You can have great joy and a great blessing in this thing.”

Because of this experience, I began to realize that I had a talent. I had an ability. I had an opportunity to relate to people to whom no one else in my immediate area could relate. A couple months later when I was in New York I met an elder in the Church who had a Mongoloid (Down syndrome) child. I could relate to him. I could help him realize that there were others who shared his burden and his problem. Sometime later in my own congregation a family that we loved very much had a child born with the same problem. Once again we could help, advise, and relate to their needs. We could help them get programs that were useful to them and to their child. You see I have a talent and an ability that nobody else has in my immediate area—to relate to people and to bring Christ into the lives of people who are experiencing this kind of difficulty.

But I cannot go to a man who has lost his father and say I know how you feel, because at this time I do not. I cannot go to a man who has lost his mother, his child, his brother, or his sister and meet his needs because I have not had those experiences. I cannot go to a teenager who has divorced parents and say I know how you feel, because I do not. I do not have the slightest idea how they feel. But some of you do. Some of you have had these experiences, and you have weathered the storm. You can go to people and relate to their needs. You can help them through their difficulties. You have a talent. What are you doing with that talent?

One time a young lady, a Red Cross nurse, was in Pennsylvania when a terrible train wreck occurred. People were injured, bleeding, and dying everywhere. She came before other medical help arrived, and began to meet the needs of these people the best she could. One of the first people she saw was a man in a business suit walking around in a state of shock saying over and over again, “My instruments,

my instruments! If only I had my instruments!” She administered to his needs, and got him out of his state of shock. As she turned to leave him she said to him, “Sir, I just wondered if you could tell me something. As you saw all these terrible injuries you kept walking around saying, ‘My instruments, my instruments, if only I had my instruments!’ What was going through your mind?” The man stood up and said to her, “Young lady, I better introduce myself.” He told her his name. He said that he was a head surgeon in a hospital near there, and all he could think of as he looked around and saw all these terrible injuries was that if only he had his surgical tools (his instruments), he could help meet these people’s needs and bring relief to their pain and suffering.

My friend, I wonder how many times God in heaven looks down at the problems this earth has, looks at you and looks at me and says, “My instruments, my instruments, if only I had my instruments!”

Are you an instrument of God? You need to answer that for yourself right now. Are you an instrument of God? Are you a tool of the Lord bringing joy, peace, and relief into the lives of people? Or are you a part of the problem bringing pain and despair because of your lack of involvement? You cannot be an instrument of God unless you are forged according to God’s plan. The blacksmith cannot make an ax unless he uses a plan or a pattern. God said you must believe in Him. Do you believe? Are you willing to admit this belief, which we call confession? Are you willing to live God’s system and repent and turn away from the world’s way of life? Are you willing to be forged in God’s system by being buried in water in baptism for the remission of your sins to become an instrument of God? Then, as an instrument of God, use your talents and your abilities to bring joy, relief, peace, love, and understanding into a world so desperately in need of these things?

There are some of you who undoubtedly have been instruments of God at one time. But you are just like the ax that the blacksmith made. When he finished making it, it was beautiful, shiny, and new. Then somebody left it in the garden and it has been unused and been exposed to the elements and the forces of this world. Just like that ax, you have become rusty, corroded, something that nobody wants to have anything to do with, despicable because you are no longer a beautiful, shiny, clean useful instrument of God. Will you be an instrument of God? Will you be a part of the Lord’s work? If you will be an instrument of God and if you will follow God’s system you have the greatest promise that can be made to a person considering

human suffering and pain and death. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4). Be an instrument of God!

P.S. Since the original writing of this booklet my wife and I had continued to wrestle with the problem of a blind, mentally-retarded, physically-challenged son. In an attempt to reach out to people with the same kinds of difficulties we wrote another book titled *Timothy—My Son and Teacher* which we would be happy to loan to anyone, or provide to anyone at our cost, who has wrestled, is wrestling, or knows someone who is wrestling with the problem of a damaged child. On May 9, 2008 I lost my wife Phyllis to 60 years of insulin-dependent type I diabetes. We also have her story of living a successful life with a chronic illness, which is available in a book titled *Living Successfully with Diabetes*. We have several other books that are written by people who have had illnesses or handicaps which effected their lives and how they dealt with those illnesses or handicaps. If you are interested in these books or anything else in the **Does God Exist?** program please write us, or visit our Web site, www.doesgodexist.org and look in our catalog.

Sincerely,

John Clayton

Mail the coupon below to:

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Niles, MI 49120
E-mail: jncdge@aol.com
FAX: 269-687-9431

Home page: <http://www.doesgodexist.org>

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