

Everything happens for a reason is a pious and noble-sounding platitude often uttered by well-intentioned people searching for significance in the darkness of seemingly meaningless suffering. However, *Everything happens for a reason* is a noble lie and a pious fraud, a fallacy wrapped in assurances that there is a beneficial and perhaps divine reason behind *everything*.

As a belief system, it is best categorized as superstitious folklore, because it offers a simplistic, one-size-fits-all answer for things that are at best mysterious, incomprehensible and unfathomable.

Everything happens for a reason is an attractive proposition because it seems to give certainty to uncertainty, comfort in the midst of chaos, and positive and divine direction in the face of seemingly random events. But in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the notion that there is a divine notion for *everything*, turning God into the

Creator and Author of a preordained script for all the details of the lives of *everyone* is an illogical absurdity. It's lazy thinking and an illogical, irrational gullible notion.

Everything is going to be okay is yet another equally misleading and illogical platitude. Given how one might define "everything" and "okay," in many tragedies *everything will NOT be nor will it ever be, okay*.

Share the simplistic fairy tale that *everything happens for a reason* and *everything will be okay* with a child who has been

“...our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”
—Romans 8:18.

sexually abused—the person who was sexually trafficked—the soldier who returns home without his/her leg(s)—the spouse whose law enforcement husband or wife was just shot and killed by a drug-crazed criminal.

The logical conclusion behind *everything happens for a reason* and *everything is going to be okay* is, for the victim—for the one who is suffering:

“If everything happens for a reason and if everything is going to be okay, then something is wrong with me. Perhaps I deserve what has happened. Perhaps God wanted me to suffer to teach me a lesson. Perhaps I have no right to be as depressed as I am.”

Many things do not happen for a divinely intended purpose. We experience life as cause and effect, but a few trips around the block in this world of heartache and pain can help us conclude that tragic effects are not directly caused or preordained by God.

Everything happens for a reason?

A child is abducted, abused and brutally murdered. The reason?

During a home invasion, a family is traumatized and emotionally scarred for the rest of their lives. The reason?

A worldwide pandemic (say, just

for conversational purposes, like COVID-19) indiscriminately causes premature deaths, leaving fatherless and motherless children, making spouses widows and widowers. The reason?

The cancer ward of the hospital is full—many of the individuals are terminal. Some propose there is a reason for all diseases and that God is ensuring these cancer patients to pay for their sins. Really? What about the seemingly good and virtuous people who suffer horribly and die from cancer and other diseases while people who seem to be living diabolical and monstrous lives of depravity and crime live long and enjoyable lives in the lap of luxury? ***Everything happens for a reason?***

Losing a child is a lasting trauma. Being betrayed by your closest friend or your marital partner is a pain that can only be carried and borne (by Jesus, who promises to take our burdens and give us rest) but may never in this life be healed. Personal tragedy and devastation can lead to growth and new opportunity, but it often does not.

Of course, it is true that good can come out of evil, that hope can triumph over defeat, and that “all things can work together for good” (Romans 8:28). ***Everything can be redeemed*** and transformed. Jesus told his disciples “... *with God all things are possible*” (Matthew 19:26).

The gospel of Jesus Christ promises a time when ***God will “restore everything”*** (Acts 3:21). The book of Revelation foretells a new heaven and new earth in which ***God makes everything new*** (Revelation 21:5).

God is in the business of taking lives that are devastated and overwhelmed, lives that are like old cars in a junkyard, with no future use other than scrap metal, and giving new life and goodness, creating light out of darkness, love from hate, peace in the ashes of war. It’s the Jesus Way. It’s a way of life Jesus teaches by saying “*love your enemies...*” (Matthew 5:44) and what Paul advises in saying “*Do not repay anyone evil for evil*” (Romans 12:17).

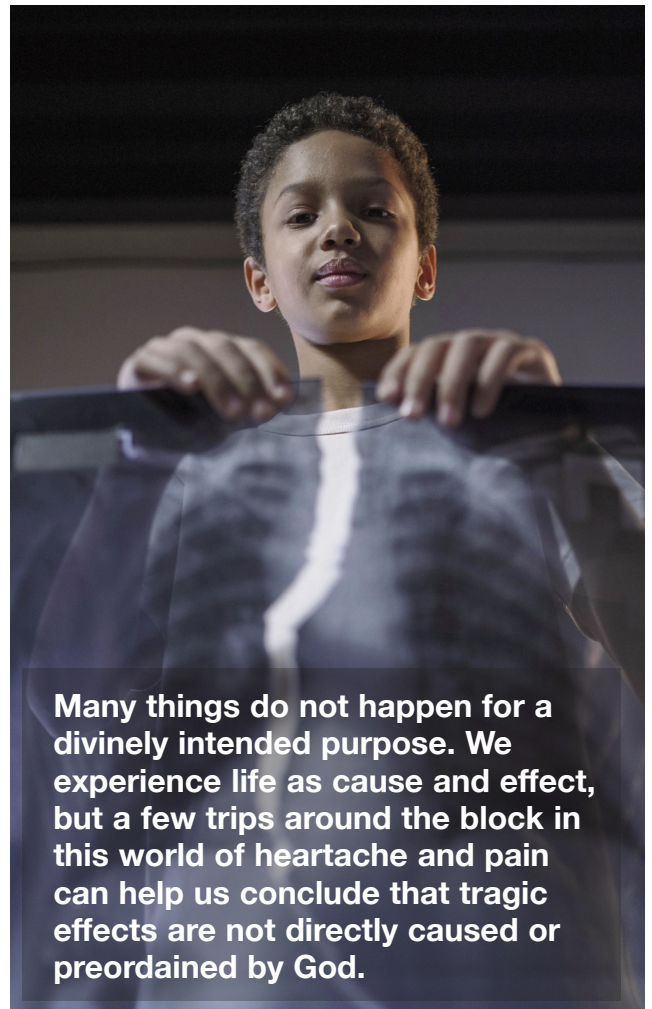
God is a good Father who never causes anyone to suffer. Evil and suffering exist because God, out of his love, gave humanity the freedom to make choices, and as soon as human agency was part of the equation here on earth, corruption, agony and pain became inevitable.

God doesn’t impose himself or “his will” (another term that is thrown around rather loosely and subjectively) on us. He allows us to make decisions, depicted so famously in the parable of the lost son/the prodigal. The father did not stand in the way of a disastrous decision his son was making, knowing full well that his adventure would not turn out well.

Declarations summarizing a recent event like “God intended that this happen” or “God told me to do a, b or c” can be adjunct platitudes to ***everything happens for a reason*** and ***everything is***

going to be okay. When something wonderful, inspiring and beautiful happens, some dogmatically inform others that God made it happen.

Instead of dogmatically announcing that God miraculously caused a beautiful thing to happen, I prefer to thank him *if and to the degree* he was involved in what happened, while acknowledging that his ways are above my ways, and his love, wisdom, mercy and grace beyond



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my ability to comprehend.

Dogmatically assigning a particular conclusion in life to have been *the will of God* is beyond our capacities. How can I triumphantly declare that God did something wonderful in my

life, or in that of my family, friends and loved ones while at the very same time, in a similar or virtually the same predicament or challenge, others did not receive an uplifting or positive result or answer from God?

Thank God *in case* and *to the degree* he was involved, but allow for the fact that God doesn't always intervene or interfere in every detail of your life.

Speaking of dogmatic declarations, when you find yourself at a loss for words, trying to comfort a loved one, avoid saying, ***"Everything happens for a reason,"*** because it is false, a religious illusion providing no real, consequential help. Instead, tell those you comfort that you have no idea about the pain they are enduring and that you are there for them and with them and will listen and pray and do your best to help.

Terrible things happen that have no logical, meaningful reason. The world is not fair, and God never pretended that it

would be. Time and chance happen to us all (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

In Christ, God takes ugliness and reprehensible, meaningless suffering and transforms every tragedy so that *"our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us"* (Romans 8:18).

Everything Happens for a Reason ... And Other Lies I've Loved
by Kate Bowler

Kate Bowler, a professor at Duke Divinity School was living a "blessed life." At thirty-five, she had a great job, a loving husband and a new baby. Then she was diagnosed with Stage IV colon cancer. Forced to face her mortality, she began to see the poverty of the prosperity gospel and its "can-do" spirit.

Is illness a moral failure? What does it mean to live in a society that insists everything happens for a reason?

Stripped of her certitude, Kate discovers that without it, life is hard... but also beautiful in a way she had never known before.

That's why the Cross of Christ is the center and focus of our faith. It's a truth more worthy of our confidence than misleading and vacuous slogans like ***"Everything happens for a reason."*** □

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Christianity Without the Religion—Quote for the Day