



# AND SO IT GOES



By Paul S. Williams

## An Answer to Pain

**I**n his book *Soul Survivor*, Philip Yancey states a truth that resonates with me. He says, “No matter where I start, I usually end up writing about pain. I set out to write about something lovely, like the diaphanous wing of a mayfly, and before long I find myself back in the shadows, writing about the brief tragic life of a mayfly.” I tend to be the same way. Maybe it’s the hard wiring in my brain, or the background of my life, or a combination of the two. But I tend to think a lot about pain.

I’d like to say I have always endured suffering without complaint, but I’d be lying. For the better part of three years I was plagued by physical pain that came when it wanted and refused to leave no matter what specialist I visited. And yes, I often found myself saying “Why me?” But my suffering was nothing compared to the suffering of others. You’ve read of one giant of the faith as he has alluded to his own suffering in the past three issues of the *CHRISTIAN STANDARD*. We would all do well to bear our suffering with the grace with which Lynn Gardner has borne his.

As much as we might protest, God has never answered the “Why me?” question. The book of Job in the Old Testament is a story about suffering. All the

way through, you’re convinced that when you get to the end, God will finally explain suffering once and for all. But He doesn’t. Job is just reminded that God is God, and Job is not: “Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place? Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom? Does the eagle soar at your command?” As Frederick Buechner said, “God didn’t so much answer as explode.”

The subject of suffering comes up often in Scripture. But instead of providing an answer to the question of pain, God invites us to move on to a completely different question. He wants to turn our attention to our response to pain and suffering.

It’s easy to see God’s response to pain and suffering. He sent His Son to earth to suffer and die. And He invites us to trust His Son with our pain and suffering. To trust the one who suffered with us and found life on the other side of death. To trust Him to serve as our companion and guide on this same journey.

The question moves from “Why me?” to “Will I trust the one who journeys with me?” And that’s not a question for God to answer. That’s a question I must answer. And how I answer that question may be the most important decision I ever make.

**Pain and suffering come up often in Scripture. Instead of providing an answer for us, God wants to see how we respond.**

### Seen & Heard

Compiled by S. J. Dahlman

Family disorganization is more important than either race or income in explaining violent crime. After accounting for family income, the National Longitudinal Study of Youth reveals that **young people in father-absent families are twice as likely to be in jail** as those in two-parent families. According to William Galston, former assistant to President Clinton, “To avoid poverty, do three things: finish high school, marry before having a child, and

produce the child after you are 20 years old.” Only 8 percent of people who do all three will be poor; of those who don’t, 79 percent will be poor.

—James Q. Wilson, “The Family Way,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 7.

“Dogma is what you have to believe, whether you believe it or not. And law is what you must do, whether it is good for you or not. . . . **Jesus and his words** have never belonged to the categories of dogma or

law, and to read them as if they did is simply to miss them.”

—Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (HarperCollins, 1998).

The number of 501(c)(3) **charitable organizations** registered with the Internal Revenue Service **grew by more than 58 percent**, from 464,000 to 734,000, between 1989 and 1998.

—National Center for Charitable Statistics at the Urban Institute Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, Washington, D.C.