



*Suffering and the Search for Meaning: Contemporary Responses to the Problem of Pain*

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## Seeking to Understand Suffering

After years of teaching religion at various liberal arts colleges, philosopher Richard Rice was invited to teach a graduate course on the subject of suffering at a nearby health sciences university. Students destined for careers fields such as dentistry, medicine, nursing, physical therapy and public health comprised the class, and Rice wasn't sure how they might handle philosophical theology. Far from disengaging, however, the students joined in vigorous discussions, citing intellectual concerns and sharing personal needs.

In a similar vein, Rice's new book *Suffering and the Search for Meaning* can provide informed yet accessible assistance to those who want to explore questions about suffering, including its possible purposes and origins. Weighing the strengths and limitations of seven different theodicies, Rice helps readers think through difficult issues, addressing questions such as:

- How can ideas about suffering help those experiencing suffering?
- If suffering is a common part of life, why do we find it so unsettling?
- Is it more helpful to categorize suffering as a problem or a mystery? Why?
- How might we best care for friends or family who are suffering?
- What does the Bible say about God's sovereignty?
- How does an understanding of human agency help account for suffering?
- What are some of the benefits of suffering?
- What does Scripture suggest about the devil's power to cause suffering?
- Why does Christ's suffering on the cross matter?
- What should a practical theodicy provide for us?
- How might a person go about constructing a personal theodicy?

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