

# Does Suffering Have Meaning?



Catholic Cemeteries  
Archdiocese of Vancouver

## ANSWER KEY

1. "If it feels good, do it."

- Unknown

**Level:** 1 **Reason:** Focused entirely on immediate, selfish gratification.

**Sample revisions that reflect Level 3 or 4:**

a) "If it makes you a better version of yourself, do it."

b) "If it is God's will, do it."

2. "Without health, life is not life; it is only a state of languor and suffering – an image of death."

- François Rabelais

**Level:** 1 or 2 **Reason:** Quality of life measured by how well we function. Suffering has no meaning.

**Sample revision that reflects Level 3 or 4:**

"Without health, life is a difficult opportunity; a chance to die to myself for the sake of others – an image of love."

3. "The reward of suffering is experience."

- (Attributed to) Harry S. Truman

**Level:** 2 **Reason:** While the wisdom gained from experience is a reward of suffering, this is still a self-focused approach to suffering (although not an *inherently* destructive one). Suffering, for the Christian, goes far beyond the reward of experience.

**Sample revision that reflects Level 3 or 4:**

"The reward of suffering is participation in the saving action of Christ – the salvation of souls."

4. “The reason to consider life, and what’s of value, is to make sure you’re not missing out.”  
- Brittany Maynard

**Level:**   2   **Reason:** Focused on ego-gratification (“What’s in it for me?”).

**Sample revision that reflects Level 3 or 4:**

“The reason to consider life, and what’s of value, is to make sure a) you’re glorifying God in all that you do; b) you’re putting others before yourself.

5. “In Webster’s terms, ‘nirvana’ means freedom from pain, suffering and the external world, and that’s pretty close to my definition of Punk Rock.”  
- Kurt Cobain

**Level:**   1 or 2   **Reason:** Suffering – physically, emotionally, and intellectually – is viewed as the greatest evil.

**Sample revision that reflects Level 3 or 4:**

“In Webster’s terms, ‘nirvana’ means freedom from pain, suffering and the external world, and that’s pretty close to my definition of *escapism*. True love embraces reality with the courage and confidence of one who trusts in God’s goodness.”

6. “Sorrow makes us thoughtful and deep, makes us kind and sympathetic; makes us realize the emptiness of the things of this world and the true beauty of Heaven.”  
- Rev. James E. Sullivan

**Level:**   4   **Reason:** Suffering is understood as having value to our soul; it also helps us be mindful of our end goal: blissful union with God in Heaven.

(No revisions necessary).