

Why, God, Why?"

Wrestling with the questions of evil, suffering, and God

9/4	Questioning the Suffering God
9/11	The Problem with the Problem
9/18	Why does Evil Exist?
9/25	What not to say when someone asks "Why?" and What to do.
10/2	Moving from "Why" to "What now"
10/9	Testimonies of grace and Q & A

Intro:

- Remembering where you were 15 years ago today and wondering where was God
- Wrestling with the existence of Evil and Suffering
 - Can we believe and still ask these questions? (Mark 9:24)
- Reminders from Last Week's message:
 - Can't answer every question (and that's okay), but we attempt to lay a foundation to deal with the issues.
 - The God we are questioning suffered Himself in Christ for us, and with us.
 - Always deal with these issues in the context of the cross
- How we approach the issue of Evil and Suffering impacts our view of God and vice versa
 - What is our mental picture of God when it deals with suffering?

I. Defining the Problem

- The standard presentation of the problem.
 - We believe that God has the power to defeat evil and end suffering. We believe that God is loving and wants to defeat evil and end suffering. Yet...evil and suffering exist.
 - What do we do with this? Confusing dilemma we face.
- All belief systems must address this dilemma. Some ways include:
 - Evil and Suffering are illusionary
 - Polytheism
 - Lessen God's Power
 - Lessen God's Goodness
 - Stop believing in God

II. The Problem with an absent God in the face of Evil and Suffering

- If there is no God, how do we differentiate between good and evil?

- Choosing to not know and ignore God's revelations of good and evil (Rom 1:18-32)
- If there is no God, then why be so upset at Him for the existence of evil and suffering?
 - The cry of the crisis

III. The Cry of Habakkuk (Hab 1:1-3, 13)

- A godly prophet who believes in God is asking why God tolerates evil and accusing God of not listening.
- "How Long" introduces the concept of time into the equation (Rev 6:9-11)
- New way of seeing the dilemma:
 - Since God is powerful, then He can defeat evil and end suffering. Since God is loving, He will defeat evil and end suffering. Therefore, one day God will defeat evil and end suffering. (Rev 21)
- This is not the best possible world, but this is the best way to get to the best possible world.
 - God is love, and He created us to be loved and love in return.
- This is a good world with the potential for evil because of the free choice of humanity.
 - If no choice for evil, no suffering exist, but also no choice for love.
- We are moving to the best possible world where love is perfected and evil and suffering are no more, but that day is not today.
- "How long" suggest patience and trust in God.
 - "Patience with others is love, patience with self is hope, patience with God is faith." –Adel Bestavaros
 - Habakkuk 3:17-18

Conclusion:

- Why is God waiting so long? (2 Pet 3:9)
- Where was God on 9/11?

"Unless we wrestle with this question of pain and suffering, we not only cut ourselves off from understanding the central Christian mystery; we trivialize the gospel which meets the world at its point of deepest need."

- N.T Wright,

I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross. In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?

- John Stott