

## Why Does God Permit Evil and Suffering?

### A. Knowing the Challenge

1. God doesn't exist because evil and suffering exists
2. God isn't all powerful because He doesn't stop evil and suffering
3. God is not good or loving because while He could stop suffering and evil He doesn't
4. God is evil because He commits evil and causes suffering (e.g. He punishes the wicked, commanded the killing of women and children, encouraged slavery, etc.)

### B. Knowing the Truth

1. Evil and suffering exist in the world:
  - a. Types of evil (John MacArthur)
    - 1) Natural evil (e.g. death, disaster, destruction, earthquakes, injury, sickness, disease, etc.)
    - 2) Moral evil (e.g. sin, abuse, violence, murder, immorality, rape, etc.)
    - 3) Supernatural evil (e.g. Satan, demons)
  - b. Types of suffering
    - 1) Physical
    - 2) Emotional
    - 3) Psychological
    - 4) Spiritual
2. Evil and Suffering are a result of sin:
  - a. God did not create evil and suffering: He created everything good (Genesis 1:31): **"God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good."**
  - b. Sin corrupted what God created (Genesis 3:8-24):
    - 1) Shame (3:7): **"they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves lion coverings"**
    - 2) Fear (3:8-10): **"[they] hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God"; "I [Adam] was afraid...so I hid myself"**
    - 3) Blame (3:12): **"The woman whom You gave to be with me..."**
    - 4) Deception (3:13): **"The serpent deceived me..."**
    - 5) Curse (3:14): **"Because you [Satan] have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle..."**
    - 6) Enmity (3:15): **"I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman..."**
    - 7) Toil (3:16a): **"I will greatly multiple your toil in childbirth..."**
    - 8) Marital Strife (3:16b): **"he [husband] shall rule over you"**
    - 9) Cursed creation (3:17): **"Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it..."**
    - 10) Thorns and thistles (3:18):
    - 11) Sweat (3:19)
    - 12) Death (3:19): **"till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return"**
    - 13) Separation from God (3:22-23)

- c. This ultimately makes Satan, and to some degree man, responsible for evil and suffering (e.g. the Fall)
3. We experience evil and suffering for many reasons:
- a. Sometimes we suffer the natural consequences of living in a fallen and corrupt world (Romans 8:20-22): **“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”**
    - 1) Physical ailments like my SIBO
    - 2) Extreme heat in the summer or excessive cold in the winter
    - 3) Natural disasters like hurricanes, tornados, floods
  - b. Sometimes we suffer the natural consequences of our own sin:
    - 1) Proverbs 4:19: **“The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.”**
    - 2) Proverbs 10:16: **“The wages of the righteous is life, The income of the wicked, punishment.”**
    - 3) Proverbs 10:24-32—Excellent extended passage
    - 4) Proverbs 13:20-21: **“He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm. 21 Adversity pursues sinners, But the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity.”**
    - 5) Examples:
      - a) Discipline by parents
      - b) Arrested for crimes
      - c) Health issues for unhealthy eating
      - d) Physical injuries for doing stupid things
  - c. Sometimes we suffer because of other people’s sins or actions:
    - 1) Directly: violence or abuse, persecution
    - 2) Indirectly: car accident caused by another person, child suffering from parents’ divorce
  - d. Sometime we suffer because of Satan’s attacks:
    - 1) Job’s suffering at the hands of Satan (Job 1:6-12)
    - 2) Demon possession of the unsaved (Matthew 9:32-33; 12:22)
    - 3) Satan’s attack on Christians (1 Peter 5:8-10)
  - e. Sometimes we even suffer because of God’s chastisement:
    - 1) Hebrews 12:6-11: The Lord disciplines those He loves
    - 2) Paul’s thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7): **“Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me-- to keep me from exalting myself!”**
    - 3) Example from 1 Corinthians 11:30-32—many were **“weak and sick, and a number sleep”** because they were abusing the Lord’s Supper
    - 4) James 5:14-16
4. Why does God allow evil and suffering?

- a. The Bible doesn't directly answer why God allows evil and suffering, but we can infer some reasons based on the Biblical evidence
- b. He might allow them because He created mankind with volition and the power of contrary choice (provided by Creation.com):
  - 1) Volition refers to the ability to make choices—this is different than free will because only Adam and Eve (prior to the Fall) and those who have been redeemed from sin truly have free will; others are still in bondage to sin and are not truly free; however, all men have volition
  - 2) The power of contrary choice means that one can make a choice contrary to their nature (e.g. Adam and Eve were sinless but chose to sin)
  - 3) This was the only way to ensure that one's love for God is genuine, because it is made freely (not pre-programmed by God)
  - 4) In order to prevent evil and suffering, God would have to remove mankind's volition and power of choice, which would make us nothing more than robots
- c. He might allow them because they serve as a reminder of the consequences of sin and to draw mankind back to Himself:
  - 1) C. S. Lewis: "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."
  - 2) In other words, God allows evil and suffering to serve as a reminder of the devastating effects of sin
  - 3) Our own penal system, and even child discipline, is based on this very same principle: facing the consequences of our actions is often what drives us to change our behavior
  - 4) The same is true spiritually that suffering can be used by God to draw people back to Himself (e.g. the mini-revival after September 11<sup>th</sup>)
- d. The Bible is more specific about the value of suffering for believers :
  - 1) Suffering proves the character of our faith (1 Peter 4:12)
  - 2) Suffering causes us to mature (James 1:2-4)
  - 3) Suffering deepens our relationship with Christ (Philippians 3:8-12)
  - 4) Suffering helps us help others who suffer (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
  - 5) Suffering prepares us for our future glorification (2 Corinthians 4:17)
- e. One final reason to consider is that sometimes God allows suffering because it's His will and glorifies Him:
  - 1) Consider Job's suffering—Job never got an answer to his question, "**Show me why You contend with me**" (Job 10:2)
  - 2) Consider the blind man healed by Jesus (John 9:1-3): "**As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?' 3 Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.**"
  - 3) Consider that Peter's suffering and death glorified God (John 21:18-19): "**Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.**" 19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "**Follow Me!**"

- 4) Consider that we are to glorify Christ in our suffering (1 Peter 4:16)): **“but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.”**

C. Knowing How to Respond
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**Q.** Why did God create evil or suffering?

**A.** God didn't create evil or suffering. Genesis 1:31 says that God created all things good. The Bible also says in Genesis 3 that sin brought evil and suffering into His perfect world when Adam and Eve sinned against God. So sin corrupted everything God created and that's why evil and suffering exist. We can't blame God for something He didn't do. We should put the blame where it belongs.

**Q.** If God is so loving, why doesn't He stop all the suffering in the world (or Why doesn't he end poverty, sickness, disease, etc.)?

**A.** That's a good question and it's a hard one to answer. God hates that there is suffering (or poverty, sickness, etc.) in this world. King David wrote that “the LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18). However, these things originally came into the world as a result of mankind rejecting God and sinning against Him. Maybe one reason God allows suffering (or poverty, sickness, etc.) is because they He wants to remind us of the damaging effects of sin. Maybe He wants such things to draw us back to Him and remind us how much we need Him.

**Q.** Why would God make innocent people like babies or children suffer?

**A.** God doesn't make them suffer. Suffering is a result of living in a sinful and corrupt world that turned its back on God. Unfortunately, babies and children sometimes suffer simply because they live in this broken world. I imagine that God's heart breaks when He sees them suffer.

**Q.** Why does God allow Christians to suffer?

**A.** That's a good question. When we become Christians God doesn't promise us that we won't suffer any more. In fact, He said the opposite. We will suffer, partly because we live in a sinful world, sometimes because we sin, and sometimes because suffering is good for us. For instance, Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4 that suffering demonstrates the kind of faith we have. James wrote in chapter 1 of his letter that going through trials makes us stronger and more mature Christians. Paul also wrote to the Corinthians in his first letter that our suffering allows us to help others that suffer.