

411: Why Does God Allow Suffering and Evil?

HOOK

WHY DOES A GOOD, ALL-POWERFUL GOD ALLOW EVIL AND SUFFERING?

Moral evil – one person wants to hurt another for self-benefit.

Natural evil - Suffering and pain – breaking a leg, hurricane, disease

Many atheists have been made by the problem of suffering/pain. I've heard one popular atheist say that if there is a God, and he does stand before Him, he'll shake his fist at Him in defiance. He'll challenge God about bone cancer in children and wars and such.

The argument: If God is all-powerful, He has the ability to stop evil and suffering. If He is all-good, He would want it to stop and stop it. Evil hasn't stopped. Therefore, He is either not good or too weak.

The problem with the argument: It pictures too small a god. This either/or equation is limited to only two possible conclusions because it was produced by a limited, human mind. God is good (omnibenevolent). God hasn't stopped evil... yet. It doesn't account for His sovereignty, His justice, His patience, His love, or His wisdom. God is omnipotent.

How did we get here? Adam & Eve

- **Gen. 1:26** - God gave them authority over the earth.
- **Gen. 2:9,15-17** – Man's responsibility & free will to obey & choose (love) God.
 - "free will" – the ability to choose what I'll do next. We can't truly love without free will.
 - Adam was the last human to have true free will. As slaves to sin, our wills are corrupt apart from Jesus.
 - Those who are "in Christ" are able to love God and people because our wills are no longer slaves to a sinful will.
- **Rom. 5** – Through Adam, sin came into the world.
- **Gen. 3:17-19, Rom. 8:20-22** – Creation affected by our sin. The domain God gave us is now stained by our sin-saturated authority over it.

- Mankind and creation are out of alignment with the Creator and His order. What if God annihilated all sources of evil? We wouldn't love it because we wouldn't be around to have an opinion.

BOOK – The Answers from Scripture

(I could show a shotgun blast of verses about suffering, but instead I think it would be more helpful to show a collection of people who dealt with suffering.)

1. Demon Possessed man – Spiritual Warfare

- **Mark 5:1-20** (key = v.18-20) – Jesus heals a demoniac.

2. David – Discipline

- **Psalm 39:1-3,4-13** – God's discipline for David's sin.
 - **Heb. 12:6-11** – A sign of love towards His sons and daughters

3. Joseph – Butterfly effect

- **Gen. 37-46** – Joseph's rise to power and salvation of family.
 - We have no idea the domino effects of what we walk through.
 - **Isaiah 55:8-9** – *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

4. Paul – Spiritual Growth

- **2 Cor. 12:7-10** – Paul's thorn in the flesh. (humility)
 - **Rom. 5:3-5** (endurance, character, hope)
 - **James 1:2-4,12** (steadfastness, wholeness, heavenly reward)
 - **Rom. 8:16** (united with Christ and glorified with Him)
- Suffering leads us to grow. We can learn more from pain than from blessing.
- Suffering leads us to Jesus. If we only walked in ease and blessing, our faith would become shallow, prideful, self-sufficient, immature, and selfish. But, our frailty humbles us and drives us to call out to Him. Pain is temporary, but spiritual growth is permanent.
- "I feel afflicted." Next thought, "God wants me to draw close to Him. He wants to be faithful and draw me close to Himself."

5. Job – We don't know

- **Job 1-2** – Job's suffering
- **Job 13:3,15,18,20-25** – Job wants to make his case to God because he doesn't know why he's enduring such suffering.
 - Sometimes we may never know on this side of heaven why we're suffering.
- **Psalm 119:75** – *“in faithfulness you have afflicted me.”*
- **We are limited to:** “How I feel about what I think is going on in my situation.”
 - Only an infinite mind could understand all an infinite God does.
 - **1 Pet. 1:12** - Angels look curiously at what God is doing. And they have a better understanding of God and view of His work than we do.
- If I can admit that I don't know what God is doing, isn't it arrogant for me to believe God isn't doing anything?
- Just because we can't imagine how God will use this for good, doesn't mean His omnipotent hands are tied from bringing about His good purposes.

Ultimate truth which is seen in all of these = #1: GOD IS AT WORK FOR HIS GLORY.

1. Demon possessed man – Mark 5:18-20 – *“He went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.”*

2. David – Heb. 12:10-11 – *“He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness... it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*

3. Joseph – Gen. 45:7-8 – *“God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So it was not you who sent me here, but God...”*

4. Paul – 2 Cor. 1:8-10 - *For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers,[b] of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. 10 He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.*

- “How would we know His faithfulness if we were never in situations that we needed Him to be faithful or else everything would fall apart?” – Aaron Wragg

5. Job – Job 38:1-3 – (God) “You teach me how to run my universe. Who do you think you are?” **Job 42:1-6** – (Job's response) His sin was having too small a view of God.

TRUTH: Man born blind – God’s glory

- **John 9:1-11** – Jesus heals him. Why? V.3 – For God’s glory.
 - The disciples only saw two options. **Their view of God was too small.**
- **John 9:24-33** – He preaches to the religious leaders giving God glory and coming to know Christ personally.
- HE receives the due recognition & praise. He’s the hero. Out of darkness, light.
- **Jesus – Ultimate example – Heb.2:9** - *But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*
 - In the greatest example of man’s sinful hate against God, He receives the greatest glory. Through Jesus we can know and worship God. God is at work in every evil and pain.

LOOK

CHOOSING OUR PERSPECTIVE

Everyone will experience the effects of moral evil and natural evil in their lifetime. From this they’ll suffer two things: 1) pain and 2) a lack of understanding, but can choose two entirely different perspectives.

Worse. With each “why” anger increases. = “undo it” “make the pain stop” “if I can understand it, I’ll feel better.” But it wouldn’t. “I’ve been hurt. I’m angry. I quit. I choose to reject God because of it.”

If you are an atheist, when someone you care about is suffering, will they come to you for comfort? What do you have to offer them? No God = no comfort. But the greatest comfort you could offer is the greatest truth.

Better. “I’ve been hurt. I’m hurting. God is smarter than me. God loves me. I choose to trust Him in it. I choose to rest in Him in it. I can heal through Him. I can become more like Him. I can be used by Him because of it. This impossible day/season isn’t the rest of my life... nor is it my eternity. My strength is not limited to my ability, nor is this situation the limits of what God has for me.”

Whichever conclusion they choose, they will still have **pain** and **lack understanding**, but the second is full of TRUTH, hope, and has the potential for peace.

I can’t tell you why your suffering is happening.

Interesting: Jesus has gone through every human experience. God stepped into His creation, “emptied Himself” of His divine privileges, and suffered the human experience along with us... and greater. He was born poor and died disgraced, but He thought you and I were worth it.

TOOK

3 THINGS TO OFFER THOSE IN SUFFERING (Mike Winger)

1. Remember God’s **PROMISES**

- **Rom. 8:28** - *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*
- **Rom. 8:18** - *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*
 - bad today – greater amount of good via God’s providence
- **Phil 1:6** - *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*
- **Rev. 21** – Evil will end.
 - “tears” – We’ll remember the pain of the past, but we won’t feel the pain of the past.

2. Remember God’s **PRESENCE**

- **Ps. 34:18** - *The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.*
- **Ps. 61:1-3** - *Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer; 2 from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, 3 for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.*

3. Remember **PATIENCE**

- **Is. 40:28-31** - *Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. 30 Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; 31 but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*
- There’s a difference between “time heals” and “time and the Holy Spirit heal.”

4. Remember **PRAISE**

- Psalm 42 – ALL of it.

RECAP

- God allowed for sin and suffering to enter the world by man's sin.
- Sin and suffering are here because of spiritual warfare, God's discipline for sin, God's butterfly effect, our spiritual growth, we may never truly know.
- All the reasons there is sin and suffering boil down to a single reason. God is at work for His glory.
- A biblical perspective gives an eternal purpose for suffering and makes peace and hope possible.
- What do we do while in pain and suffering? The 4 "P's"
 - Remember God's Promises; Press into God's Presence.
 - Be Patient and Praise.

Challenge 1: Instead of straining to escape difficulty or struggling to understand "why," look for what God is wanting to do in you during your suffering.

~ Soli DEO Gloria