

ATHEIST: Interesting move, but I'm not convinced.

CHRISTIAN: You may not be convinced, but your complaint still presupposes God.

Norman Geisler & Frank Turek, *"I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist"*, 389.

Why Doesn't God Stop Evil & Suffering?

REASON #1: God Created Us with the _____ to make _____.

Genesis 2:15-17: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (v.16) And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; (v.17) but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

"Then why didn't God create a world without human freedom?" "Because that would have been a world without humans. Would it have been a place without hate? Yes. A place without suffering? Yes. But it would also have been a world without love, which is the highest value in the universe. That highest good never could have been experienced. Real love – our love of God and our love of each other – must involve a choice. But with the granting of that choice comes the possibility that people would choose instead to hate." **Lee Strobel Interview with Peter Kreeft in "The Case for Faith", 51.**

"If God were to remove all evil from our world (but somehow leave man on the planet), it would mean that the essence of "humanness" would be destroyed. Man would become a robot. Let me explain what I mean by this. If God eliminated evil by programming man to perform only good acts, man would lose his distinguishing mark—the ability to make choices. He would no longer be a free moral agent. He would be reduced to the status of a robot. Let's take this a step further. Robots do not love God. God created man with the capacity to love. We cannot force others to love us. We can make them serve us or obey us. But true love is founded upon one's freedom to choose to respond. Man could be programmed to do good, but the element of love would be eliminated—and so would love. What would it be like to live in a world without love? Thus we can see that God's use of his power to eliminate evil would not prove to be a positive solution to the problem of suffering. The results of such action would create greater dilemmas. Either man would be reduced to the status of a robot in a loveless world or he would be annihilated." **Billy Graham, "Till Armageddon: A Perspective on Suffering", 52.**

REASON #2: Adam & Eve exercised their freedom and we experience the _____ of the _____.

Genesis 3:6: "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."

◆ **A Curse upon _____** (Genesis 3:14-24; Romans 3:10,23; 5:12).

◆ **A Curse upon _____** (Genesis 3: 17-19; 5:29; Romans 8:8-25).

KEY QUESTIONS: *Where do evil and suffering come from? Why doesn't God stop it all?*

REASON #3: If God put an end to all evil He would have to _____ all _____.

Romans 5:12: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and **death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—**"

Romans 3:10-12: "As it is written: "There is **no one righteous, not even one**; there is **no one who understands, no one who seeks God**. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is **no one who does good, not even one.**"

REASON #4: God has set an _____ to destroy all evil.

Revelation 21:4: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be **no more death or mourning or crying or pain**, for the old order of things has passed away."

Revelation 22:3: "No longer will there be any curse..."

KEY QUESTIONS: *Why does God have an appointed time to destroy evil? Why not do it now? Why not 1,000 years ago?*

2 Peter 3:8-13: “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

Revelation 7:9-10: “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. **(v.10)** And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

God patiently waits for those who are His to come home spiritually!
Are you one who needs to come home?

FINAL THOUGHTS

God is all good, all-loving, and all-powerful regardless of the presence of evil and suffering in our world.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think of the ‘free will’ argument to explain the reason for evil and suffering?
2. Is all suffering bad, or evil? Could God have ‘good’ purposes he is accomplishing through suffering? Consider the following passages & formulate a response (Is. 52:13-52:12; Acts 4:23-30; 1 Pet. 2:21-25).
3. What reasons do the following passages give for suffering?
 - Romans 5:12
 - Romans 8:18-25
 - Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:3-7
 - 1 Peter 4:12-19
 - 1 Peter 5:8-9
 - 2 Corinthians 1:3-6
 - 2 Corinthians 1:8-9
 - Hebrews 12:5-11
4. As Christians we will all suffer and eventually die, what do the following passages tell us our perspective should be for TODAY? (Psalm 73:25-26; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Phil. 1:19-26; 1 Peter 1:3-6).

REASONS TO BELIEVE

If God Exists, Why is There So Much Suffering?

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Introduction:

“I share the belief that the most serious challenge to theism was, is, and will continue to be the problem of evil. I share the view that the most serious intellectual obstacle that stands between many people and faith is uncertainty about the existence of evil.” **Ronald Nash, “Faith & Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith”, 177.**

“Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot; or he can, but does not want to; or he cannot and does not want to. If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent. If he can, and does not want to, he is wicked. But, if God both can and wants to abolish evil, then how comes evil in the world?” **Epicurus, philosopher**

THE CHALLENGE STATED

1. If God is all-good, He *would* destroy evil.
2. If God is all-powerful, He *could* destroy evil.
3. If God is all-loving, He *should* destroy evil.
4. If God is all-knowing, He *knows how* to destroy evil.
4. But evil is not destroyed.
5. Therefore, there is no such God.

Does the Existence of Evil Prove that God Does Not Exist?

ATHEIST: If there really is an all-good, all-powerful, theistic God, then why does he allow evil?

CHRISTIAN: How do you know what evil is unless you know what good is? And how do you know what good is unless there is an objective standard of good beyond yourself?

ATHEIST: Don’t try to avoid the question

CHRISTIAN: I’m not trying to avoid the question. I’m simply showing you that your complaint presupposes that God exists. In fact, the existence of evil doesn’t disprove God. It may prove that there is a devil, but it doesn’t prove there is no God.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & LEADERS GUIDE

1. What do you think of the 'free will' argument to explain the reason for evil and suffering?

2. Is all suffering bad, or evil? Could God have 'good' purposes he is accomplishing through suffering? Consider the following passages & formulate a response (Is. 52:13-52:12; Acts 4:23-30; 1 Pet. 2:21-25).

In the story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50) we see how God had a master plan for Joseph's life that included suffering (See Genesis 45:5-8; 50:19-21). The story of Job is another example where God, while he did not inflict Job with suffering, still permitted it to happen for a reason (Job 1-2). While the reason is not clear from the story of Job, we still see how God was behind it. In the story of Jesus' sufferings we also see how the Godhead (Father, Son and Spirit) together had planned (2 Timothy 1:9) from the foundation of the world that the Son would suffer and die for sinners (Rev. 13:8) and how it was the will of the Father to 'crush' the Son (Is. 53). While God the Father did not directly inflict the Son, he used secondary agents to bring about his death (Acts 4:23-30).

3. What reasons do the following passages give for suffering?

- Romans 5:12 - When Adam sinned, all humanity fell with him. The consequence is death for all.
- Romans 8:18-25 – When Adam sinned all of creation also fell resulting in things like Tornado's, hurricanes, etc...
- Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:3-7 – Trials, hardships, suffering etc...all produce character if we respond appropriately to it.
- 1 Peter 4:12-19 – Suffering comes as a result of persecution.
- 1 Peter 5:8-9 – The Devil is also at work to afflict us.
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-6 – We suffer so we can comfort those who suffer.
- 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 – Suffering has a way of making us dependent upon the Lord.
- Hebrews 12:5-11 – Some suffering comes from the hand of the Lord who is disciplining a wayward child.

4. As Christians we will all suffer and eventually die, what do the following passages tell us our perspective should be for TODAY? (Psalm 73:25-26; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Phil. 1:19-26; 1 Peter 1:3-6).

Maintaining an eternal and heavenly perspective is so critical. Having a hunger for God's presence and desire to be with him is key. If we love this earth so much that we never want to leave it, then we will have a harder time dealing with suffering and death when it comes.