

# I Believe God, but...

## IF God is Good, Why is there Evil?

**The Goal: In the midst of difficult circumstances I can remain hopeful that one-day God will restore all that has gone wrong.**

We are all stricken the realities of hardship and suffering. All of us have heard stories, seen pictures and listened to news reports about evil and disasters in this world.

Just a few years ago Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines with tremendous force wrecking the shore line, destroying houses and killing up to 3600 people. Most of us remember that in December 2004 a tsunami killed more than 250,000 people around the rim of the Indian Ocean. Some of us have personally been hit by suffering in our family, school or friends.

One of the questions that will come up often in your life is, “How Could God Allow Suffering?”

As people wonder about this they often conclude that **“He might be either all-powerful but not good enough to end evil and suffering, or else he might be all-good but not powerful enough to end evil and suffering.”**

Start with the questions of suffering and evil...

Is suffering different than evil?

How do you know what evil is?

- Profoundly immoral: but how do you know what moral is?

Authority. What is your *authority*? All the major issues in your life, decisions you will make and how you go about interpreting this world comes down to the question of what authority is your guide?

C. S. Lewis says that most people object to the existence of God because life should be fair and just. Suppose for a moment that your authority is public opinion and empirical evidence. People respond to suffering and evil by throwing out God. Since bad things happen, God must not exist. Though it's understandable why people would do that, does throwing out God make dealing with evil easier? No.

Maybe you're an atheist. An atheist is someone who doesn't believe in God. So, in order to discuss the problem of evil in the world an atheist has to decide some objective way to

determine what is evil and what is good. The only way to know what evil is would be to measure it against the good. What is the good? Does that sound like a reliable and consistent system? No.

TEACHING NOTE#1: GETTING RID OF GOD DOES NOT MAKE EVIL EASIER TO DEAL WITH.

### **How should a Christian view suffering and evil?**

What are the causes of evil?

It is man's freewill?

- The fall of man, meaning, God made man perfect and put man in the garden with certain expectations and laws. Man chose to follow themselves instead of follow God. The consequences of that are vicious. God did not create man evil, God created man good, and the evil that exists in this world is because man is continually rebelling against God.

Satan

- 1 Peter 5:8 - Be sober minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Tell Joseph's story...

- Joseph was one of the sons of Jacob and favored among his father.
- One day Joseph had a dream and decided to tell his brothers about it. The dream went something along the lines that "one-day you will bow down to me."
- This didn't go well, the brothers got mad, sold Joseph into slavery and told their father that he had died.
- Throughout Joseph's life he had great hardship, prison, being accused of sins he didn't commit, but he had remained righteous through this time.
- Joseph was so blessed by God that he arose to be the secretary of state for Pharaoh and ended up saving many thousands of people (including his family) from starvation.

**READ:** Genesis 50:20

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

**Question: Who meant it for evil, God or the brothers? Why did God allow it to happen?**

TEACHING NOTE #2: GOD HAS A PLAN FOR YOUR PAIN

God has a big plan. If he is who he says he is then his plan is a lot bigger than ours.

The greater good principle is helpful to some, but it breaks down because it still doesn't satisfy the questions that come up when something horrible happens.

**Teaching #3: Jesus on the cross knows our suffering and loss**

- Jesus came to earth and called all people to follow Him. The rejection of Jesus by the people led to his trial and crucifixion.
- Before going to the cross Jesus was beat up, spit on, called names, innocent, whipped and naked.
- Then while Jesus was on the cross he cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This was a cry of desperate anguish and separation.

Why did Jesus do it? – The Bible says that Jesus came on a rescue mission for creation. He had to pay for our sins so that someday he can end evil and suffering without ending us. Why does God allow evil and suffering to exist? We still don't have a good answer for that after looking at the cross, but we know what the answer isn't...it can't be because He loves us. It can't be because God is indifferent about us and our condition as fallen people. God took on misery so that you and I will have the hope of one day being completely restored and perfect.

**READ:** Revelation 21:4

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

This means that every horrible thing that ever happened will not only be undone and repaired but will in some way make the eventual glory and joy even greater.

No one but Jesus, has taken on such a burden and died for the sake of those who serve Him. There is none like Jesus, none!! So as you question or doubt the existence of God due to the hard things you see and experience in this world – see that He has victoriously overcome sin and death so that though we may experience temporary hardship, the promise is that one day all things will be restored to the way God intended.

**TEACHING NOTE #4:** God has an ultimate answer for the evil you experience.

What are you struggling with? What's going on in your life that's causing you to doubt God's goodness? Then think about your hope...are you hoping in man, evolution or science to get you through? I want you to consider hoping in the one who came from heaven, endured great suffering so that one day you and I will have the hope of a new life where all the hurt will be replaced with immeasurable joy.