

Is Christianity True?

God and Evil

5/4/25

Day 1

So far we have looked at truth and it's importance as well as your worldview.

Now what we've got to do is consider some of the biggest objections against the Christian faith. No objection looms more significant than the problem of evil and suffering. In a sense, this isn't really a challenge to the existence of God, depending how you cash this out. It's really a strike at the heart of the goodness of God. These days, all you got to do is look at the news of the day and what do you discover? If it bleeds, it leads. Leading stories, if you just analyze them, are typically about two things. Either natural disasters, or about evil things that human beings cause.

Why is the world so broken? Every worldview, like we talked about, has to give an explanation for why the world is broken. The question is not, "Can I tell you exactly why you suffer or exactly why some evil has happened to you?" If that is your expectation, you're going to be disappointed at the end of this week. But if the question is, which worldview is the most existentially or emotionally satisfying and intellectually satisfying, then I think we'll have a very different perspective.

This really is the big question we see emerging everywhere. So what are questions of immigration really about? People are suffering. And how do we respond as a nation to this? What are questions of gun control about? People are getting hurt. Is the best way to solve it to take guns or give people more guns?

Almost every ethical and cultural issue in some way, if you trace it back, is about evil and suffering in the world and us trying to respond. This is a perennial issue.

1. Thoughts?

Day 2

The main question is, "Why is there evil and suffering in the world? And it's not just a question that skeptics have. It's a question that followers of Jesus often have. I've asked this question many times in my life. When my wife had a miscarriage, I've gone through some pretty severe physical pain. It's natural to say, "God, You can stop this. Why don't You? It takes no effort for You to do so." In fact, Habakkuk, the minor prophet said,

How long, Lord, must I call for help,

but you do not listen?

Or cry out to you, "Violence!"

but you do not save?

The problem of evil and suffering is a human question. The question is how will we respond?

A scholar by the name of Doug Groteis, a PhD in philosophy, brilliant. His wife was a part of an international high IQ society, and she had a rare form of dementia where she could not remember how to tie her shoes. And he wrote a whole book grieving this. And he said, "The question I kept coming back to was, was I going to believe that God is good and God knew what He was doing even if it made no sense to me?" That's the heart of the question, and that's where faith comes in.

1. Thoughts?

Day 3

When we say the problem of evil and suffering, it's not just really one problem. There's actually multiple angles and way to approach this. And if someone ever asks you that question, I'd ask them this question, right back.

"Of all the questions you can ask about God, why that one?"

Because, their answer is going to tell you a lot.

Why is that a helpful question? The person might say, "I was in a chat room when we were debating this. I was reading a book. I'm in philosophy 101, or I was watching Batman verse Superman." (That movie is about the problem of evil). Then it's probably more of an intellectual question, but I'm convinced when people ask this, the vast majority of time it's personal. "Why is my uncle dying of cancer?" "Why did my parents get divorced?" "Why was I bullied as a kid?" This is what we call the emotional problem of evil. It's how do we help people who are suffering, who are struggling? If that's the case, this doesn't require an intellectual response. Oftentimes when somebody is suffering personally. And we say, "Hey, turn that frown upside down. Romans says, God works all things together for the good." You can actually do more harm than good.

There is certainly a time and place to cite scripture, but there's a time and place to not cite scripture. In fact, Romans 12:15 says,

"Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep."

In other words, meet people where they're at emotionally. When my daughter comes up to me and goes, "Dad, I got an A on my test." What is she looking for? I need to go, "Charlotte, that's great. Tell me about it. How did that make you feel? When did you first find out." I enter into that joy with her. When somebody shares hurt, what are we looking for? Just be present with me. Just hurt with me. Just cry with me. It's called empathy.

Day 4

Sometimes we avoid people in pain because we don't know what to say. You know what? Sometimes you don't have to say anything. Sometimes you can just simply say, "I know you're hurting. How can I best minister to you? I just want to care for you. What does that look like?" Maybe they say, "I don't want to talk." Maybe they say, "I just want to talk." But just being present for people is a Christian, biblical response. Now, this is not a counseling class, but let us make sure when people are suffering, we respond emotionally and pastorally and with the heart that Jesus did. He wept at the death of Lazarus.

With that said, we also have to give a philosophical response. Dennis Prager is a Jewish talk show host. He wrote a book called *Happiness is a Serious Problem*. It's a fascinating book, and he noticed that many couples who experienced the sudden tragic death of a child, according to his research, most would get divorced or separated. He said, but couples who stayed together, one common factor was they at least had a philosophy of life that could make sense of such a tragedy. It doesn't take the pain away but gives you context. So, shifting to the philosophical response helps us respond to suffering but also be prepared with an answer when people ask. Now, a helpful place to start is to define what we mean by evil. What do we even mean by evil?

C.S. Lewis, a former atheist, he writes this in his book, *Mere Christianity*. He said,

"As an atheist, my argument against God was that the universe seems so cruel and unjust. But how had I gotten this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?" This is a brilliant insight. C.S. Lewis was saying, the world was unjust, that implies a standard of justice. And if there is no God, how do you get a standard of justice?"

Day 5

You can have evil. You can have good without evil, but you can't have evil without good.. I think the problem of evil is one of the best reasons to believe that there is an objective, moral standard that has been broken. People have fallen short of it. That's in part what C.S Lewis is explaining. But think about when you say there's evil in the world, what are you saying? You're kind of saying things are not the way they're supposed to be. What does that imply? A way that the world is supposed to be. If there's no designer and there's no mind and there's no God, there is no way that the world is supposed to be.

The complaint of evil is that things are broken. We talk about a broken clock. That means it's not functioning as it's supposed to function. We talk about a broken vase. Its design has been marred. When we talk about a broken world, the same thing naturally implies that there's a design behind it that's been marred or broken. So the problem of evil points towards objective good, which only makes sense if there is a God. That's what C.S. Lewis was onto. Now, sometimes we think of good and evil as if they're kind of two equal and opposite competing forces, so to speak. Kind of like a yin and yang. There's a little good in evil, a little evil in good, but I'm not sure this is the most helpful, intuitive way to think about evil.

Think about it more like this. Take something that has an original design such as a wrench. What happens when a wrench goes bad? It gets rusted or it gets bent. It gets rusted. It's no longer the way it was meant to be. In a sense that's what evil is like. So you could have a wrench according to its good design that if you care for it never goes bad. But the idea of rust only makes sense if you have something good that's gotten corroded.

So in a sense, evil is a corruption of what is good. So that means you can have good without something be corrupted, but you can only have a corruption if you first have an objective standard of good.

1. Thoughts?