

Always Be Ready

Proclaiming the Gospel by Defending the Faith

August 12th: If God is Good, why is there so much Suffering?

Another conversation: “How could I believe in a Good God, when thousands of children die each day because it won’t rain? Or because they are born female? Or because they don’t have access to simple medication?”

Head: The problem of evil is universal.

- Regardless of what worldview you adhere to, evil and suffering is a problem.
- If you believe in a “good” God of any kind the issue is “why does it exist?”
- If you believe in evolution or a Godless worldview of any kind the issue is “why does it bother you?”

Tactic: Take their worldview out for a spin

- o If evolution is true, then we are all products of natural selection, survival of the fittest: in that world view the weak dying off, the suffering of those not strong enough to defend themselves isn’t tragedy, it’s the product of evolution.
- o In fact the very idea that a person looks at evil or suffering and says to themselves “that’s not right, that’s not the way it ought to be” implies that they have an internal idea of what is right and what ought to be. At what point in the evolutionary timeline did empathy and compassion evolve? What’s its purpose? Isn’t it counter productive to survival?

Beware: Often times this isn’t an intellectual argument. It is often very personal.

- When that’s the case we can’t simply employ a tactic, we can’t simply maneuver into a conversation where we slam truth down on them.
- IMPORTANT: Also note that we perceive suffering through our own lens of experience. Objectively we would all say being sexually abused is worse suffering than not being popular in school. But we can all only interpret emotional pain by what we have experienced, therefore the worst thing I have experienced will seem as bad to me as the worst thing you have experienced, even if objectively they are worlds apart.
- So take people’s pain seriously!

Heart: The Bible reveals a God who is both Sovereign over and Good concerning Evil.

SOVEREIGN - Isaiah 45:5-7

- ⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other,
besides me there is no God;
I equip you, though you do not know me,
⁶ that people may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is none besides me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
⁷ *I form light and create darkness,
I make well-being and create calamity,
I am the LORD, who does all these things.*

- Let's be careful how we speak: God causes sin vs God allows sin to happen.

- **GOOD- Romans 8:28**

- 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.

- **Genesis 50:20** - 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.

- Let's remember the story of Joseph, if anyone had a claim to life being "unfair", if anyone had grounds for calling his suffering severe it was Joseph...

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Hands: Be an ambassador of the God of all comfort.

- **2 Corinthians 1:** ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

- In the design of God, one of the roles our suffering plays is that it equips us to comfort non-Christians in their afflictions.
- God will orchestrate our trials in such a way that if you have lost a loved one in some tragic way, or you have dealt with abuse in your background, or you have battled illness and disease, your affliction has not been for nothing. It was to equip you to be an ambassador of the God who provides comfort in those situations.

- **Acts 2** - ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

→ Let's remember that the most heinous act ever committed, the most evil, unfair, unjust moment of suffering, namely the torture of God Himself, at the hands of sinful men and the execution of history's only innocent man by a corrupt system full of systematic evil, was orchestrated by God for the ultimate good mankind has ever known: the redemption of man and the changing of our eternal destiny by the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Christianity offers the most satisfying answer to the question of evil of any world view I have encountered:

- Your suffering is real, and terrible, but there is design in it, promised to bring about GOOD for the people of God and glory to God Himself.

THE REASON CHRISTIANITY OFFERS THE GREATEST ANSWER FOR THE QUESTION OF SUFFERING IS BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY HAS THE GREATEST SAVIOUR.

How Jesus answered Suffering:

1. He found purpose in it.

John 9:1-7

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 was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

- God equips Christians to comfort non-Christians so that they might have alleviation from their suffering both presently and in eternity.

2. He experienced it.

- God Himself came to earth, found himself in the midst of the evil and suffering all around us, experienced more of it than any of us can imagine, so in the topic of suffering our God is not a silent play-write but one who understands exactly the heart ache we feel by way of personal experience.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

3. He conquered it.

- There is alleviation from the suffering of God's people in the eternal reality to come.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.