

“Tough Questions: The Problem of Evil”

I. The Problem – Theodicy - “If God desires there to be evil in the world, then He is not good. If He does not desire there to be evil, yet evil exists, then He is not all-powerful. Thus, if evil exists God is either not good or not all-powerful.”

I. Unorthodox Answers

A. Rabbi Harold Kushner, “When Bad Things Happen To Good People”

B. Process Theology

C. Christian Science – “Evil is an illusion.”

D. Atheism = the theodicy proves there is no God.

II. Orthodox Answers:

A. Evil is privation (Augustine and Thomas Aquinas)

<p>Augustine: Evil is not a substance any more than darkness is a substance. Darkness is the absence of light. Evil is the absence of virtue. To bring about darkness all you need to do is remove light. To bring evil into existence God merely needed to withdraw virtue. To withdraw virtue is not in and of itself an evil act.</p>

B. Free will

C. Theocentric vs. Anthropocentric (God-centered vs. Man-centered view of the issue)

- Man-centered = If God is all-powerful and all-good, how can He allow evil and suffering to exist? Since evil and suffering clearly exist, God cannot be all-powerful or all-good. Therefore, the Biblical view of God is logically inconsistent.
- God-centered = “God is all-powerful and all-good. Thus, He does not allow evil to exist, except that for which He has a morally sufficient reason to allow.” (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28-29)

D. Why God allows evil

Discussion & Application:

1. Does evil in the world prove that there is no God?
2. Genesis 1:31; Psalm 135:5-7; 1 John 1:5. Since God is both light “and in Him is no darkness at all” and the One who created all things “very good,” how is it that evil came to be in the world? What, if anything, sustains it?
3. Genesis 50:20; 2 Chronicles 12:14. Based on these passages and your prior knowledge, how would you define “evil”? If God did not create evil, is it better to think of it as a “thing” or as the absence of something?
4. Genesis 2:9, 17; 3:1-7. Why did God allow for the possibility of evil in creation? Why did He not limit it and/or its effects? Is His purpose for allowing it to continue the same as it was in the Garden? Do you think there is more evil in the world now than at other times in history? Can you explain your answer biblically?
5. Exodus 34:5-7; Romans 9:14-23. What attributes of God can we only have come to know because of the presence of evil in our world? Why would God want us to know these things about him?
6. Isaiah 45:1-7. How do you reconcile verse 7 with James 1:13?
7. 1 Corinthians 15:42-58; 1 Peter 1:10-13. How does focusing on the glory of eternity with Christ allow us to deal with the evil we experience every day, whether it’s done to us or by us? Spend time thanking God for the hope of glory He has given us.