

Suffering and Evil

God has morally sufficient reasons for permitting the evil and suffering in the world.

(could it be that the present conditions form the best environment for bringing the maximum number of souls to Christ?)

1

Seven horizontal lines for writing.

ABATT
Suffering and Evil

Christian Life Assembly
Jim Hoffman

2

Seven horizontal lines for writing.

God Does Big Things with Small Deeds
by Max Lucado

"Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin" (Zech. 4:10 NLT).

Begin. Just begin! What seems small to you might be huge to someone else. Just ask Bohn Fawkes. During World War II, he piloted a B-17. On one mission he sustained flak from Nazi antiaircraft guns. Even though his gas tanks were hit, the plane did not explode, and Fawkes was able to land the plane.

On the morning following the raid, Fawkes asked his crew chief for the German shell. He wanted to keep a souvenir of his incredible good fortune. The crew chief explained that not just one but eleven shells had been found in the gas tanks, none of which had exploded.

Technicians opened the missiles and found them void of explosive charge. They were clean and harmless and with one exception, empty. The exception contained a carefully rolled piece of paper. On it a message had been scrawled in the Czech language. Translated, the note read: "This is all we can do for you now."

A courageous assembly-line worker was disarming bombs and scribbled the note. He couldn't end the war, but he could save one plane. He couldn't do everything, but he could do something. So he did it.

God does big things with small deeds.

3

3

Seven horizontal lines for writing.

Against a towering giant, a brook pebble seems futile. But God used it to topple [Goliath](#). Compared to the tithe of the wealthy, a widow's coins seem puny. But Jesus used them to inspire us. And in contrast with sophisticated priests and powerful Roman rulers, a cross-suspended carpenter seemed nothing but a waste of life. Few Jewish leaders mourned his death. Only a handful of friends buried his body. The people turned their attention back to the temple. Why not?

What power does a buried rabbi have? We know the answer. Mustard-seed and leaven-lump power. Power to tear away death rags and push away death rocks. Power to change history. In the hands of God, small seeds grow into sheltering trees. Tiny leaven expands into nourishing loaves.

Small deeds can change the world. Sow the mustard seed. Bury the leaven lump. Make the call. Write the check. Organize the committee.

Moses had a staff.
 David had a sling.
 Samson had a jawbone.
 Rahab had a string.
 Mary had some ointment.
 Aaron had a rod.
 Dorcas had a needle.
 All were used by God.
 What do you have?

God inhabits the tiny seed, empowers the tiny deed. He cures the common life, by giving no common life, by offering no common gifts. . Don't discount the smallness of your deeds.

4

Suffering and Evil



5

5

Suffering and Evil

God has morally sufficient reasons for permitting the evil and suffering in the world.

(could it be that the present conditions form the best environment for bringing the maximum number of souls to Christ?)

6

Suffering and Evil

- Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. NIV
- When we consider the problem of evil and suffering in light of all that God is, we soon conclude there is great deal we do not know, and perhaps do not want to know.



7

7

Suffering and Evil

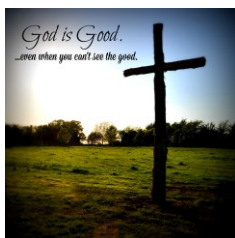
- Suffering and evil seem random and unfair.
- They also seem to contradict the idea of an all-powerful and all-knowing God who loves us.
- Frequently suffering and evil constitute the best arguments of God's enemies and He does not seem to mind.

8

8

Suffering and Evil

- Few things are as common to the human experience as suffering.
- How we answer the "If God is good" question will have a big impact on how we view God.

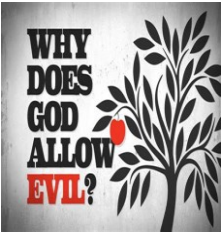


9

9

Suffering and Evil

- There isn't just one scripture that explains why an all-powerful, all-knowing God does not always intervene when and how we think he should.
- However, there are many scriptures that can help to shape our thinking about the problem of suffering.

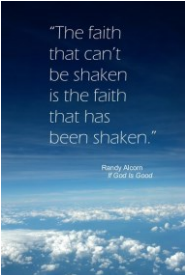


10

10

Suffering and Evil

- 1 Peter 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **7 These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.** NIV



11

11

Suffering and Evil


- The problem of evil and suffering moves from the philosophical to the personal in a moment of time.
 - Your doctor says “you have cancer”.
 - You learn your child is being abused.
 - Your spouse announces they are leaving.

12

12

Suffering and Evil

- Pain is always local and has a face and a name.
- It's a disease
- It's a person
- It's a circumstance



13

13

Suffering and Evil

Is it possible that we do not fully acknowledge suffering until it has a face?

- In this century millions of Sudanese children have been murdered, raped and enslaved.
- The 2004 Asian tsunami killed more than 280,000 people.
- More than 25,000 third world children die every day of preventable diseases.
- The 1994 Rwandan genocide was like having (2) WTC attacks every day for 180 days in row.

14

14

Suffering and Evil

- When C.S. Lewis' wife died he said, "If I had really cared as I thought I did, about the sorrows of the world, I should not have been so overwhelmed when my own sorrow came."
- More people cite the problem of evil and suffering in the world as their reason for not believing in God than any other reason.

“The real problem is not why some pious, humble, believing people suffer, but why some do not.
C. S. Lewis
<https://www.bagandprow.com>

15

15

Suffering and Evil

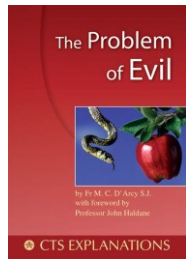
- A “Barna” poll reports that when people are asked “if you could ask God just one question what would it be?” the number one answer is “Why is there pain and suffering in the world?”.
- “The fact of suffering undoubtedly constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith, and has been in every generation. It’s distribution and degree appear to be entirely random and therefore unfair. Sensitive spirits ask if it can possibly be reconciled with God’s love and justice.” John Stott

16

16

Suffering and Evil

- **You will not get far in a serious conversation about God with an unbeliever before the problem of evil and suffering arises.**
- **It has become the ‘trump’ card of the of naysayers intended either to stump us or to shut us down.**



17

17

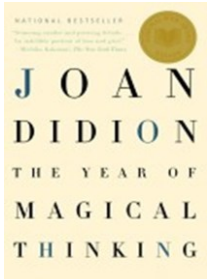
Suffering and Evil

- “A faith that leaves us unprepared for suffering is a false faith that deserves to be lost.” Randy Alcorn
- Auschwitz survivor Victor Frankl wrote “just as the small fire is extinguished by the storm whereas a large fire is enhanced by it, likewise a weak faith is weakened by predicaments and catastrophes, whereas a strong faith is strengthened by them.”
- Believing God exists is not the same as trusting the God who exists.

18

18

Suffering and Evil



- The last words of this book about the loss of loved ones are “no eye is on the sparrow”.

19

19

Suffering and Evil


- Suffering and evil both exert a force that either pushes us away from God or draws us closer to him.
- A man was admitted to the hospital with sepsis and asked how a loving God can allow this. He received these answers from a chaplain and a social worker.
 - I will look it up.
 - God is a giant who sometimes accidentally steps on the ants.

20

20

Suffering and Evil

- Imagine growing up in a world where sin was wrong, but had no temporal consequences. What would be the likely result of living in a world like that?
- If there were no suffering in the world, what would motivate us to seek God?



21

21

Suffering and Evil

- People are fond of saying at times of contentment that “God is Heaven and all is right with the world”.
- But, things are not right with the world and have not been so since Genesis 3.
- Man is out of sync with God and it shows up in our lives every day.

22

22

Suffering and Evil

• Rom 3:10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." 13 "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." 14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and misery mark their ways, 17 and the way of peace they do not know." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes." NIV

23

23

Suffering and Evil

- This is the world we live – it’s beautiful, but blighted.
- Has glimpses of goodness, but evil abounds.
- Seems like Heaven at times, and but things never seem quite right.
- This is our home – for now.

24

24

Suffering and Evil

The next slide shows a list of things generally thought to be true by secular world and are used to reason our world to a hopeless and godless world view.

25

25

Suffering and Evil

- If God is all good then he would want to prevent evil and suffering.
- If God is all knowing, then he would know how to prevent evil.
- If God is all-powerful then he is able to prevent evil.
- And yet, evil and suffering are common to life under the sun so God must not exist.

26

26

Suffering and Evil

Is God both willing and able to prevent evil?

27

27

Suffering and Evil

Secular arguments go like this.

- Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able?
 - Then he is impotent.
- Is He able, but not willing?
 - Then he is malevolent.
- If he is both able and willing then why is there evil?

28

28

Suffering and Evil

• Even Sherlock can't solve it, "What is the meaning of it Watson? What object is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear? It must tend to some end, or else our universe is ruled by chance, which is unthinkable. But what end? There is the great standing perennial problem to which human reason is as far from an answer as ever." Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

• These words were part of a fictional script, but are rooted firmly in reality.

29

29

Suffering and Evil

• The saints have wondered Ps 6:2 Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am faint; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are in agony. ³ My soul is in anguish. **How long, O Lord, how long?** NIV

• Hab 1:2 **How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?** NIV

• Rev 6:10 They called out in a loud voice, "**How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?**" NIV

30

30

Suffering and Evil

- Rom 16:19... but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. NIV
- Amos 5:15 Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. NIV

A regular prayer of mine is "help me to love good and hate evil".

31

31

Suffering and Evil

- James Montgomery Boice on being diagnosed with liver cancer.
- "A number of you have asked what you can do, and it strikes me that what you can do, you are doing. This is a good congregation, and you do the right things. You are praying certainly, and I've been assured of that by many people. And I know of many meetings that have been going on. A relevant question, I guess, when you pray is pray for what? Should you pray for a miracle? Well, you're free to do that, of course. My general impression is that the God who is able to do miracles--and He certainly can--is also able to keep you from getting the problem in the first place. So although miracles do happen, they're rare by definition. A miracle has to be an unusual thing. (continued)

32

32

Suffering and Evil

- "Above all, I would say pray for the glory of God. If you think of God glorifying Himself in history and you say, where in all of history has God most glorified Himself? He did it at the cross of Jesus Christ, and it wasn't by delivering Jesus from the cross, though He could have. Jesus said, "Don't you think I could call down from my Father ten legions of angels for my defense?" But He didn't do that. And yet that's where God is most glorified." James Montgomery Boice
- Our challenge is to reach the point where the glory of God matters more than our suffering, any amount of suffering, – not just intellectually, but actually.

33

33

Questions

34

34
