

Bible Reading for this week:

Sunday, November 1	Luke 4
Monday, November 2	Luke 5
Tuesday, November 3	Luke 6
Wednesday, November 4	Luke 7
Thursday, November 5	Luke 8
Friday, November 6	Luke 9
Saturday, November 7	Luke 10

Objections to God's Story

Story Series #3

I. Introduction: If you have been a Christian long enough and you have dared to make your convictions known, you've no doubt heard your share of objections! Protests of: "*How could a good God allow suffering & evil!?*," "*How could Jesus be the only way!?*," "*Why trust in a book written 2000 years ago?*," "*Christians are anti-scientific!*," "*How could a loving God send people to Hell!?*" and "*Why are Christians so hypocritical & intolerant!?*" are commonplace. Today we will briefly wrestle with a few of these objections to the Story of God.

1. How Could A Good God Exist When There's So Much Suffering & Evil?

Genesis 3, Roman 3:23, 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, 1 Peter 2:24, Revelation 21-22.

Ask: *If there's no God, how can suffering actually be evil? Wouldn't it just be part of nature?*

Say: *This not just Christianity's "problem." It's every worldview's problem—in other words, every credible worldview has to offer a response. Then ask: "What does your story of the world say in response to the problem of suffering & evil?"*

2. What About Those Who Have Never Heard?

Deuteronomy 29:29, Jeremiah 29:13, Psalm 19, Ecclesiastes 3:11, Matthew 7:7-11, Acts 14:16-17, Romans 1:19-20

Ask: *"Now that you have heard, 'who do you say that [Jesus is]?" (Mark 8:29).*

3. How Could Jesus Be The Only Way To God?

John 14:6 & Acts 4:12

Ask: "Since world religions make radically different claims about reality, God, man and salvation, are they not mutually exclusive?" Is it not possible that one could be right on the core issues and all the rest not?"

Ask: "Have you read the Bible?" (if yes add): "How do you think it stacks up against other holy books and religious claims?" (if no add): "Without having read it, how can you know if it is superior or inferior to other religious texts their truth claims?"

Ask: "Since you do not believe that Jesus is the only way (Lord), which of the other possibilities do you agree with?" (Liar, Lunatic or Legend). "Why are you convinced of the option you think is actually correct & true? Evidence?"

4. Isn't The God Of The Old Testament "Wrathful" & Even Genocidal?

"All the spoil of these cities and the cattle, the sons of Israel took as their plunder; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them. They left not one who breathed" (Josh. 11:14).

Realize this is "descriptive" and not "prescriptive."

Remember this was a time of "martial law"-like circumstances & utter debauchery.

Recognize that this is ancient "battle hyperbole talk" and not literal.

For example, first we're told: "There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel..." (Josh. 11:22a). Then, just three chapters later: "Now then, give me this hill ... for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the Lord will be with me, and I will drive them out as the Lord has spoken" (Josh. 14:12). And: "...when the Lord your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them...Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them" (Deut. 7:2-5). (How could they "intermarry" with the "utterly destroy[ed]"!?)

5. How Could A Loving God Send People to Hell?

Respond by:

Discussing how God will render justice, but that texts about "Hell" need careful study. E.g.:
a. How can "outer darkness" of Mat. 25:29 and the "fiery [gehenna]" of Mat. 18:19 coexist?
b. How literal should we understand "smoke," "fire" & "forever" phrases in dramatic & apocalyptic texts? (Isa. 34:10, Rev. 14:11 & Rev. 20:10).

Engaging others relationally.

Using questions and being transparent about your own unanswered questions.

Following the example of NT preachers: don't omit judgment texts but focus on God's grace!

Accepting the fact that as finite-perspective beings, we do not have God's infinite standards or perspective.

Sharing "Butler's Options." God can say:

- a. "Marry Me and Bring in Your Old Lovers."
- b. "Marry Me or I'll Kill You."
- c. "Marry Me or I'll Lock You in the Basement" (until you change your mind & love Me!).
- d. "Marry Me or Go Your Own Way" (distinguish torture from torment).

Reversing the burden and asking: "What would you do if you were God to balance & honor the free will of human persons with justice and love?"

Focusing on Jesus, the most merciful, wise, compassionate, just and loving Being there is! His character ensures none will be dealt with unfairly in the end! He invites all to eternal life!