

# Why Does God Allow Evil and Suffering to Exist?

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## UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS

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*These realities are unseen to believers, yet Scripture speaks plainly to them.*

“Evil, in the biblical context, refers to that which is morally wrong, sinful, or wicked. It is the antithesis of good and is often associated with rebellion against God. The Bible presents evil as both a personal and systemic force that opposes God’s will and purposes.”

*Biblehub*

“The experience of physical pain and/or mental distress. The Old Testament, intertestamental literature, and the New Testament present two perspectives on human suffering. On the one hand, suffering is the consequence of the flawed nature of creation. On the other hand, a person’s suffering is the direct consequence of his or her violation of God’s laws.”

*Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

- Suffering — to be pressed against.
- God is good (Ps. 34:8), wise (Rom. 11:33), just (Deut. 32:4), immutable (James 1:17), omnipotent (Jer. 32:17), omniscient (Is. 49:9–10), infinite (Col. 1:17), faithful (Deut. 7:9), omnipresent (Ps. 139:7–10), self-sufficient (Jn. 5:26), long-suffering (2 Pet. 3:9), etc.
- God’s purpose in design was and is “good.”

## HEART ISSUES — EXAMINE YOURS AS WELL AS THE INQUIRER’S

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- What do you/they bring to this discussion? (Personal experience, Biblical knowledge, healing/victory, struggle, time, etc.) Baggage? Hope?
- Is there a disconnect between knowledge and behavior?
- What or who is driving the question?

- Prepare to lean into the present: anger, accusations, grief, sorrow, physical/emotional/spiritual distress. (Fruit of the Spirit)

HOW TO ASK / ANSWER — POSTURE

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- Ask permission to know... Their whole body and presence will speak to you.
- Pay attention to what is said and what is NOT said.
- Listen with your sword (scalpel) ready to discern and sort what is true, good, and beautiful from what is false. Be careful not to trap, but to show compassion and to exhort toward truth.

*“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

Hebrews 4:12

- Their answer will likely determine how you respond and/or direct them.
  - Are they presently suffering?
  - Is the inquirer seeking healing, grieving, explanation, justice, or all of the above?
- Be bold, meek, and truthful.
- Remember: your answer will be as much demonstrated as it is spoken.

HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER — IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER

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Could suffering produce good things without it being considered good?	What do you believe the source of evil and suffering might be?
What would be required to have a world apart from evil and suffering?	Who or what determines what is good and what is evil?
“Is it helpful for you to understand that God may have good reasons for allowing some painful event?” (On Guard, p. 160)	Is it just as powerful to allow as to stop something painful, in order to produce something greater?
What does this make you feel and think about God, Church, your daily life?	What do those who have suffered say about it?

Are some evils worse than other evils in the world?

Would you allow me to share a personal testimony — not to compete but to relate with understanding?

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SCRIPTURE — A FEW PERSONAL FAVORITES

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**2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–5**

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.”*

**ISAIAH 53**

*The suffering servant — the whole chapter.*

Names of God

***Any and all are a comfort and a solution. A personal favorite:***

***“Ancient of Days”***

*“I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.”*

Daniel 7:21–22

**JOHN 16:33**

*“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”*

**PSALM 34:18**

*“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”*

**REVELATION 21:4**

*“...He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”*

**2 PETER 3:9**

*“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”*

MY VARYING ANSWERS

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- Acknowledge the reality of evil and suffering according to my own experience and knowledge (e.g., child trafficking; consequences of sin, especially toward the fatherless).
- Offer the purpose and place of perseverance, mercy, grace, and forgiveness.
- Speak the truth that evil and suffering are not the result of God’s indifference, but of the consequences of man’s sin.
- In turn, love and good works are also by the choice of man — and were designed by God.
- What may look like indifference is often a long-suffering God who desires all to confess, repent, know, and follow His Son.
- Give a historical example of tragedy that God allowed to bring forth good (e.g., persecution spreads the Gospel; trade routes carry it further).
- Offer personal testimony for the hope that lives in me, while in a world of evil and suffering.
- This is a worthy topic to wrestle with.
- Incorporate the Gospel.
- Offer to pray.