

Bystander 6: Coexistence

Introduction

At different points in our lives, many of us wonder why a good God would allow bad things to happen. And without a clear response, that dilemma could cause us to question God's existence altogether. The Gospel writer John documented an occasion where Jesus not only brought his friend Lazarus back to life but also demonstrated how God can exist in the midst of a world of evil and suffering.

Discussion Questions

1. What's a notable real or fictional story that appeared to be heading in a bad direction but ended up turning out well?
2. Read John 11:17–45, where the apostle John recounts the story of Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead. What are some details about this story that would lead a reader to believe this actually happened?
3. In verse 35, Jesus showed emotion about this situation. What does the fact that Jesus wept—even knowing Lazarus was about to be raised—say about him?
4. Read verse 43. Imagine for a moment what onlookers would have been thinking after hearing Jesus say this. What words come to mind to describe this scene?
5. What's your biggest takeaway from this story? What is something that sticks out to you about God when reading this?
6. In what ways does the story of Lazarus parallel the story of God's relationship with people? In your mind, how does the story of Lazarus address the question, "Why would a good God allow bad things to happen?"
7. Do you have a personal example of when something that was tragic helped strengthen your faith? If so, explain.
8. Read John 11:4, where Jesus claims that Lazarus died so God may be glorified. What about the story of Lazarus can inspire you to have a better perspective in the midst of difficult circumstances?

Changing Your Mind

God not only exists in the midst of a world that has evil and suffering—he chose to engage with it. God didn't eliminate the evil; he placed it on Jesus so we would not perish but have eternal life.