

# How Could a Good God Allow Suffering?

## Tough Questions Message Series Week 8

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To answer the question, “How could a good God allow suffering?,” we need to understand...

### 1. Freedom of choice = evil (Genesis 3:1-7)

“Yes, He is powerful to prevent pain and suffering, but that will remove our freedom to choose.”

Craig Etheredge, “If God Is Good, Why Does God Allow Suffering?”,  
discipleship.org

“Norman Geisler describes [it] this way: ‘We have a real choice about what we do. God made us that way so we could be like him and could love freely (forced love is not love at all, is it?). But in making us that way, he also allowed for the possibility of evil. To be free we had to have not only the opportunity to choose good, but also the ability to choose evil. That was the risk God knowingly took. That doesn’t make him responsible for evil. He created the fact of freedom; we perform the acts of freedom. He [God] made evil possible; men made evil actual.’

And Cliffe Knechtle states in his book *Give Me an Answer*, ‘Genesis 1 clearly communicates that when God created, all his creation was very good. God did not create evil, suffering or death. He created us to enjoy himself, each other and to celebrate his gift of life. Genesis 3 is the tragic record of how man and woman chose to reject God. The Bible, history books and the morning newspaper record how an immeasurable amount of evil has followed in the wake of human rebellion against God. The vast majority of this carnage is a direct result of human choice.’”

Garry Poole, *How Could God Allow Suffering and Evil?*,  
Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2003, p. 23.

**2. Just because we can't see or imagine a good reason why God might allow suffering, it doesn't mean there can't be one. (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28-29)**

"If the all-knowing, all-wise God of the Bible exists, then there is no logical reason for us to think that God must tell us, or that we could even understand, his reason for allowing evil and suffering. The Old Testament book of Job is instructive here. In Job, we find out that God invites us to wrestle with him concerning evil and suffering. But we also find that at the end of Job's questioning, there was not an answer from God but an encounter with a God who sits above our wisdom and knowledge.

"How Can a Good God Allow Suffering?", Redeemer Presbyterian Church, [redeemersd.org/question/how-can-a-good-god-allow-suffering](http://redeemersd.org/question/how-can-a-good-god-allow-suffering)

"Though none of these people are grateful for the tragedies themselves, they would not trade the insight, character, and strength they had gotten from them for anything. With time and perspective most of us can see good reasons for at least some of the tragedy and pain that occurs in life. Why couldn't it be possible that, from God's vantage point, there are good reasons for all of them?

If you have a God great and transcendent enough to be mad at because he hasn't stopped evil and suffering in the world, then you have (at the same moment) a God great and transcendent enough to have good reasons for allowing it to continue that you can't know. Indeed, you can't have it both ways."

Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, Dutton, New York, NY, 2008, p. 25.

**3. God isn't OK with or ignoring the evil in this world. He has and will bring both justice and redemption.**  
(Habakkuk 1:1-6; Revelation 21:1-5; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

“The narrative of Scripture is unique among all belief systems in telling us that evil and suffering are not inherent aspects of existence but are alien intruders. This makes sense of our gut response to suffering and death. We feel like they don't belong. We imagine a world without evil, and we long for that world.

This is because there was and, one day, will be such a world. It's the world Jesus showed us in his miracles. The world we all want is the world that Jesus will recreate when he comes again. Only the biblical storyline satisfies our deep longing for a continuity of all that is good in this world without all that is evil.”

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**4. Out of God's love for humanity, He has entered into the suffering of this world. (1 Peter 2:23-24)**

“As the Christian sees things, God does not stand idly by, coolly observing the suffering of his creatures. He enters into and shares our suffering. He endures the anguish of seeing his son, the second person of the Trinity, consigned to the bitterly cruel and shameful death of the cross... Thus, in light of the cross, whatever reason God allows evil and suffering, it cannot be because he doesn't love us or that he is unacquainted with suffering.”

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“Christianity alone among the world religions claims that God became uniquely and fully human in Jesus Christ and therefore knows firsthand despair, rejection, loneliness, poverty, bereavement, torture, and imprisonment. On the cross he went beyond even the worst human suffering and experienced cosmic rejection and pain that exceeds ours as infinitely as his knowledge and power exceeds ours. In his death, God suffers in love, identifying with the abandoned and godforsaken. Why did he do it? The Bible says that Jesus came on a rescue mission for creation. He had to pay for our sins so that someday he can end evil and suffering without ending us.”

Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, Dutton, New York, NY, 2008, p. 30.

**How do we navigate through the suffering and evil in this world?**

- A. We cling to God's presence. (Isaiah 41:10)**
- B. We cling to God's promises. (2 Corinthians 12:9; 2 Peter 1:3; Philippians 4:19; 2 Corinthians 9:8)**
- C. We cling to God's character. (Lamentations 3:19-24)**