



The Christian's Answer to Life's Big Questions 4

Why Does Bad Stuff Happen to Good People?

→ Have you ever been asked this question? If you're honest, do you ask it yourself? How would you have answered the question before you'd listened to the message? How would the message have changed that answer?

THE ARGUMENT = Why does a God who is ALL-POWERFUL seemingly SIT BACK and WATCH ... If God is omnipotent & omnibenevolent, how can He TOLERATE the existence of EVIL and SUFFERING?

→ Give examples of 'bad stuff.' Where does it come from? What misconceptions, false assumptions and strange perspectives are there out there?

1. WHY DOES BAD STUFF HAPPEN?

FIRST THOUGHT: None of us can STAND in GOD'S SHOES and give a COMPLETE ANSWER to that question (Isaiah 55:8-9, 1 Cor 13:12).

* We do not have God's MIND, cannot see with God's EYES, do not have that ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE.

→ Is it okay not to understand? Can we really expect to understand this side of heaven? What is it that we cannot yet see?

WHO DO WE BLAME? Easy to blame GOD, as the all-powerful One ... Very difficult to blame ONESELF ... However, the one who should be receiving the blame is THE ENEMY.

* We have to answer this question through the LENS of the FALL.

* The truth is, this world is in a HORRIBLY FALLEN, BROKEN STATE

* Affects EVERYTHING, SPIRITUAL & MATERIAL

* The tendency of this age is to trivialise, minimise, normalise sin, but the reality is that its CONSEQUENCES are truly DEVASTATING ... Things have been CORRUPTED, PERVERTED, DISTORTED.

→ Reading Romans 1, what have been the consequences of sin on this world? What has been corrupted / perverted / distorted and how?

2 SIDES OF THAT

a) Humanity is sinking under the COLOSSAL WIGHT OF SIN (Romans 1:21-31).

b) The PHYSICAL WORLD is GROANING under a miserable but temporary CURSE (Romans 8:18-23).

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH?

a) In this world you WILL HAVE TRIBULATION (John 16:33).

b) SATAN comes to STEAL, KILL & DESTROY (John 10:10).

→ What fundamental conclusions can we draw from John 10:10 and 16:33? How does the gospel shine through in both?

→ "If it's being stolen, killed or destroyed, then we know where it originates." Discuss!

2. WHY DOESN'T GOD DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

CAUSATIVE v PERMISSIVE will

* The mistake is assuming that God is the CAUSE of all the ills of the universe.

* Why does He PERMIT? We can assume that every reason is an extension of His LOVE, JUSTICE, HOLINESS.

→ It would take a lot of thorough, in-depth study to really dig into cause v permission. Perhaps the biggest question would be how does divine judgment fit into that?

→ "Love, justice & holiness are like 3 legs of a stool; lose one and it falls over." Discuss!

A FEW IDEAS AS TO WHY

a) It would be CATASTROPHIC if there were no CONSEQUENCES in a FALLEN WORLD ... Hence God permits trials for DISCIPLINE, MATURING, PRUNING (John 15:1-2).

b) SHORT-TERM PAIN is sometimes beneficial for LONG-TERM GAIN.

c) We see the LIGHT most clearly when we're lost in the DARKNESS.

→ Why would it be catastrophic if there were no consequences for sin? How do love, justice & holiness play into discipline, maturing and pruning?

→ Can pain have purpose? Can suffering be redeemed? Are comfort and ease the goal?

→ CS Lewis said, "Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." Was he right?

→ "God permits crisis, grief, trial & pain, because it is precisely at those moments that the wandering soul cries out to God." Discuss!

God's SOVEREIGNTY v Human FREEWILL

* The crunch is that a SOVEREIGN God could do WHATEVER He WANTED, but He has chosen to give us FREEWILL.

* Choices have CONSEQUENCES; God doesn't STEP IN and FIX everything, precisely because He's given us FREEWILL.

→ In what sense is God in control? In what sense is He not?

→ Why does God give us freewill / let us make our own choices, even when He knows we will not always make wise ones?

3. OR DOES HE?

* Why doesn't God do anything about it? He DID: He sent Jesus ... and one day, He's COMING BACK to FINISH the job.

* FIRST COMING: Isaiah 53:1-6

* SECOND COMING: Rev 21:4

* What's holding Him back? The system is RIGGED for MAXIMUM SALVATION (2 Peter 3:8-10).

→ If God has power to eradicate evil + suffering, why doesn't He do it?

→ What was Jesus' relationship with suffering? What did He teach us? What did He accomplish for us? How does His death & resurrection change our relationship with pain & suffering?

WHAT DOES GOD DO IN THE 'IN BETWEEN?'

i) He's always WORKING TO REDEEM (Romans 8:28).

ii) He's always PRESENT (Hebrews 13:5, 4:15).

iii) He's always HOLDING EVIL BACK (1 Cor 10:13, 2 Cor 12:9).

→ What qualifies as the 'good' of Rom 8:28? How does his presence make a difference? To what extent is He holding evil back?