

Good and Evil

Part 1

LIFE-CHANGE OBJECTIVE

- To give you the truth you need to answer questions concerning the fact that we live in an evil world.

During the next two sessions we'll be looking at what the Bible says about the fact that good and evil exist alongside each other in the world today. There are many questions that are answered by understanding God's perspective on this truth.

- How could God allow such things as war and the death of children in the world today?
- If God is all-powerful and all-loving, why can't he stop evil?
- Why do bad things happen to good people?
- In light of what's happening in the world, am I just fooling myself to think that there is any hope?
- Will it ever end? When?

First, we'll look at the overall problem of good and evil. Why does it exist in the world?

FOUNDATIONS DISCIPLESHIP STUDY: Good and Evil (Part 1)

Next, we'll look at the personal side of good and evil. How do I win the battle against evil in my personal life?

WHY DOES EVIL EXIST IN GOD'S WORLD?

THREE TRUTHS

1. God is good.

His _____ is good.

PSALM 100:5

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

His _____ are good.

GENESIS 1:31 (NIV)

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

2. God is all-powerful.

JEREMIAH 32:18 (NCV)

“...Great and powerful God, your name is the Lord All-Powerful.”

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4. The world is evil.

John 3:19 (NLT)

“And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.”

1 John 2:12 (TLB)

Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you...

HOW CAN ALL OF THESE BE TRUE?

How could a good and all-powerful God create a world in which evil could exist and continues to exist? A lot of theological and philosophical jargon can be summed up in one simple sentence:

There is no _____ without _____.

God could have made a person who would never have chosen to sin, but then that person would have been denied the opportunity to choose love.

A CLOSER LOOK

Two Truths to Remember

1. God is sovereign.
2. Mankind has free choice.

How do you reconcile those two? If God gives us choice, doesn't that put us in control rather than him? Our God is an awesome God! He is able to give us, as a part of his creation, a free will to decide and yet remain in complete control of his creation. How does he do that? He is God!

One warning: Be sure to keep these truths in balance. If you lean too far towards God's being in control, you come down on the side of fatalism: it doesn't matter what we do. If you lean too far towards man's free will, you come down on the side of humanism: we are in control of our fate.

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There are three reasons why evil exists in our world today.

GOD'S WILL: BECAUSE GOD _____ EVIL

The problem of evil and suffering is possibly the single greatest intellectual challenge of Christianity. It's hard for people to understand how a great and good God could allow evil to exist.

1. He made a world in which evil _____.

In Genesis 3:

- God planted a tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- God let Satan as a snake into the garden.
- God allowed Adam and Eve to eat the fruit.

2. God allows evil to _____.

- God allows us to make evil choices.

PSALM 81:12 (NIV)

“So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.”

- God allows painful consequences for evil choices we make.

LEVITICUS 5:17 (NJB)

“If someone sins and without realizing it does one of the things forbidden by Yahweh's commandments, he will answer for it and bear the consequences of his guilt.”

A CLOSER LOOK

God's Response to Suffering

The fact that God allows suffering does not mean that He enjoys suffering.

1. He directly _____ some suffering. He is the punisher of evil (Isaiah 13:11)
2. He has _____ for all suffering (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Lamentations 3:22-33; Matthew 14:14)
3. He is willing to _____ for us in our suffering (Psalm 46:1; Hebrews 4:16)
4. He develops our _____ through suffering (James 1:2-4; Hebrews 2:10)
5. He will one day _____ all suffering (Revelation 21:3-4; Romans 8:18)

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SATAN'S INFLUENCE: BECAUSE SATAN _____ EVIL

The influence of Satan is a second reason why evil exists in our world today. Evil is not some new creation of Satan – Satan does not have the power to create anything. All he can do is try to twist or to withhold what God has created.

- Is weather evil?
- Is ambition evil?
- Is sex evil?
- Is our ability to talk evil?

All of these are good creations of God. Evil is when Satan twists them into natural disasters, or war, or immorality, or slander.

We as believers need to be able to understand and defeat the enemy without glorifying the enemy. Satan has power, but he is also stupid. (Why else would he have sinned against God?)

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SATAN: A BREIF BIOGRAPHY

Many of the ideas and pictures of Satan that we grew up with were influenced more by English literature such as Dante's *Inferno* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* than by the Bible. Here we're going to look at the straight story from the Bible about who Satan is.

1. He was an _____ in Heaven
(Revelation 12:3-9; 9:11)
2. He _____ from Heaven due to pride

REVELATION 12:7-9

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

3. He has been given _____ freedom to influence the earth.
Satan's limit: He must ask _____.

Some examples:

- Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6)
- Peter: "Satan has asked to sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31).

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4. He is unalterably _____ to eternal destruction. Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire, to be tormented forever.

REVELATION 20:10

And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur.

MANKIND'S CHOICE : BECAUSE WE _____ EVIL

Remember two truths:

1. Evil began with _____ (Genesis 3).

The choice that Adam and Eve made to sin had horrible consequences:

- If they ate of the tree they would “surely die.” Sin brings death: spiritual and physical death.

GENESIS 2:17

“But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

- Because they ate from the tree, they were banished from the Garden of Eden. Sin causes us to live in a fallen, imperfect world.

GENESIS 3:23

So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

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- Adam and Eve passed along to us as their children a sin nature. Sin became part of all of us when they bit into that fruit. That's why we all inevitable sin. We cannot refuse the temptation of evil.

This is called the "original sin." We don't start with a clean slate. We all start with the knowledge of good and evil and with a flawed heart that causes us to sin.

ROMANS 5:12

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.

2. Evil is present in _____.

It's not just "their fault." We need to be able to admit that "evil is present in me."

ROMANS 7:21

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

ROMANS 3: 9-12

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

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The line separating good and evil passes not only through states, nor between class lines, nor between political parties – but right through every human heart.

THE QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN

WHY DOES GOD CONTINUE TO ALLOW EVIL?

WHY DOESN'T GOD STOP IT?

1. He already has defeated evil (1 Corinthians 15:57; Colossians 2:15)

He defeated evil at the cross and will allow us to join him in that victory for all eternity. We are fighting a battle in which ultimate victory is assured.

2. He is _____.

God has provided for the salvation of all (1 John 2:2). God desires for all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

And he waits patiently, desiring all to come to salvation (2 Peter 3:9)

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KEY PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

How do you answer someone who asks you a question like: “How could a perfect, good, and all-powerful God allow wars and disease in the world today?” When faced with tragedy our first impulse is to ask, “Why? Why would God allow this to happen?” The study has reminded us of some of the answers, for ourselves and for others.

1. The world is evil, not because of God’s creation, but because of mankind’s _____.
2. God _____ about those who suffer.
3. It is God’s proclaimed purpose to one day do away with evil.
4. The reason he waits is so that more people might be _____, therefore not having to suffer eternal separation from him.