



Q. Why does God allow evil to exist?

Josh McDowell Ministry

A. One of the most haunting questions we face concerns the problem of evil. Why is there evil in the world if there is a God? Why isn't He doing something about it? Many assume that the existence of evil disproves the existence of God.

Sometimes the problem of evil is put to the Christian in the form of a complex question, "If God is good, then He must not be powerful enough to deal with all the evil and injustice in the world since it is still going on. If He is powerful enough to stop wrongdoing, then He Himself must be an evil God since He's not doing anything about it even though He has the capability. So which is it? Is He a bad God or a God that's not all powerful?" Even the biblical writers complained about pain and evil. "Evils have encompassed me without number" (Psalm 40:12, RSV). "Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?" (Jeremiah 15:18, RSV). "The whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now" (Romans 8:22, RSV). Thus we readily admit that evil is a problem and we also admit that if God created the world the way it is today, He would not be a God of love, but rather an evil God.

However the Scriptures make it plain that God did not create the world in the state in which it is now, but evil came as a result of the selfishness of man. The Bible says that God is a God of love and He desired to create a person and eventually a race that would love Him. But genuine love cannot exist

unless freely given through free choice to accept God's love or to reject it. This choice made the possibility of evil become very real. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they did not choose something God created, but, by their choice, they brought evil into the world. God is neither evil nor did He create evil. Man brought evil upon himself by selfishly choosing his own way apart from God's way.

Because of the fall, the world now is abnormal. Things are not in the state that they should be in. Man, as a result of the fall, has been separated from God. Nature is not always kind to man and the animal world can also be his enemy. There is conflict between man and his fellowman. None of these conditions were true before the fall. Any solution that might be given to the problems mankind faces must take into consideration that the world as it stands is not normal.

Although evil is here and it is real, it is also temporary. Evil will eventually be destroyed. This is the hope that the believer has. There is a new world coming in which there will be no more tears and pain because all things will be made new (Revelation 21:5). Paradise lost will be paradise regained. God will right every wrong and put away evil once and for all, in His time.

Christians have a justification for fighting evil, immorality and corruption. The world was not designed with evil in mind and the believer has a real basis for fighting social ills. He is not following the belief that whatever is, is right. The Christian does not condone wrongdoing by claiming that it is God's world, neither does he assume that everything that happens is agreed to by God. God does not desire evil nor does he ever condone it. He hates evil, and the Christian also is not only to despise evil, he is obligated to do something about it. Even though sin is real, it is not something that the believer accepts as the way things ought to be. By identifying with Jesus, the believer has a duty to call things wrong that are wrong and to speak out when evil is overtaking good. The Christian is not fighting against God, by fighting

social problems. Natural disasters, crime, and terrorism should not be the accepted order of things, because they were never meant to be and they will not be in God's future kingdom.

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However, some people are still bothered that God even allows evil in the first place. They question His wisdom in giving man a choice in the matter. Dorothy Sayers put the problem of evil in the proper perspective: "For whatever reason God chose to make man as he is — limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death — He had the honesty and the courage to take His own medicine. Whatever game he is playing with His creation, He has kept his own rules and played fair. He can exact nothing from man that He has not exacted from Himself. He has Himself gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair and death. When He was a man, He played the man. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace and thought it well worthwhile" (Dorothy Sayers, *Creed or Chaos?* New York, Harcourt Brace, 1949, p. 4).

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The Bible tells us that God's purposes are sometimes beyond our understanding. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8, 9, NASB). Paul, in a similar vein, wrote to the church at Rome, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unfathomable His ways" (Romans 11:33, NASB).

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Although the Bible informs us how and why evil came about, it does not tell us why God allowed it to happen. However, we do know that God is all wise and all knowing and that He has reasons for allowing things to happen that are beyond our comprehension.

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Excerpts taken from *Answers to Tough Questions Skeptics Ask About the Christian Faith*, Josh McDowell and Don Stewart. Tyndale House Publishers, 1980.

<p> <p>Additional references: Norman Geisler. *The Roots of Evil*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978. </p></p>

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