

Counseling Triage

Response - Emotions

Thoughts - Beliefs

Theology – understanding who God is and how He acts

The Existence of Evil Breaks a Person Down to the Question of Ultimate Authority in Life

- God owes nobody an explanation for the existence of evil
 - Think of all the questions that arise out of Genesis 3 that God never explains
 - Think about all the questions that arise from Genesis 22 that God never explains
 - God has morally good / sufficient / adequate reasons
 - But much is left unknown
- It simply comes down to this:
 - Whether a person has faith in God and His word
 - Or they place their faith in themselves - in their own reason and experience
 - Job asked God why (can you blame him)?
 - And yet he had to cover his mouth in shame for doing so
 - When God doesn't give us a complete answer - we must never put Him on trial
 - **Ezekiel 18:25** - *"Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?"*

Key principles of truth regarding God's character and our responsibility

- God corrects the complainer - be careful where you step
- God is sovereign and just over all
 - In spite of whatever philosophy or theology that teaches otherwise
- God is in no way obligated to disclose this apparent imbalance from our perspective
- God's word is always sufficient and reliable
- God is never unfair in what He gives a person

God is silent when giving an explanation as to WHY and HOW He brings evil about

- **Doctrine** is not capable of answering this question
- **Philosophy** is not capable of answering this question
- **Science** is not capable of answering this question
 - The only proper response is **faith and humility**

The question that Adam and Eve were faced with in the Garden is the question we all face today:

- Should we simply take God at His Word?
 - That God has a morally good and sufficient reason for evil that He has not revealed to us
- Should we critique and question God and His Word
 - Based upon of our own authority, reason, experience, and morality?

- Because “God says so” ought to be enough.
 - This answer is perfectly correct, proper, and enough
 - It keeps our hearts grounded in the correct presuppositions

The unbeliever lacks faith in God and refuses to trust Him as Lord

- They claim:
 - God cannot be all powerful
 - God cannot be all loving
 - God is evil Himself
 - God doesn’t exist

When given the biblical reason that God has a morally good and sufficient reason for the existence of evil:

- They refuse to accept it *because of their lack of faith*
- The problem is *their unbelief*
 - The problem is not the lack of evidence
 - The problem is not a lack of knowledge
 - It is a Lordship issue
 - Not simply a philosophy issue / not a logical issue

How an unbeliever responds to the problem of evil and suffering exposes the condition of their heart as it refuses to take God at His Word

- As it retaliates with unbelief, rebellion, anger, and self-justification
- By not taking God at His word
 - **Gen 3:1** - *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “**Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?**”*

BECAUSE God is Who He Says He is, and BECAUSE it is Impossible for God to Lie:

- Then trusting in Him and His Word is the ONLY reasonable thing to do.
- God is not obligated to you in any way to explain or give a reason as to why He does what He does
- God is never forced to argue or convince anyone of anything
 - His Word alone gives sufficient explanation
 - He simply asks you to trust Him
 - It is all about having the proper perspective
- John Frame states:
 - Scripture deals with the problem of evil in its typically theocentric (God-centered) as opposed to anthropocentric (human-centered) way.
 - So many traditional treatments of the problem assume that God’s ultimate purpose is to provide happiness for man, and of course that is not so.
 - God’s ultimate purpose is to glorify himself, and indeed man’s own chief end “is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever
 - For the wicked and those who continue to reject Him:
 - For this group, history is not working toward a “greater good,” but toward a “greater curse”

Counseling: This is All Good – I Get It - But the Pain Still Exists

When Knowledge and Understanding Doesn't Remove the Pain of the Evil Done to Us

- We may understand the problem of evil
- We may realize God has a plan and purpose for it
- We may realize God is with us through it all
- We may realize God has a morally good and justifiable reason for allowing this to happen
- **BUT** – pain is still there / not going away / it still hurts - bitterness / frustration / anger

We know we are not supposed to be angry with God

- And yet, if we are honest – we are angry with God even though we try our hardest not to
- Don't allow this to create space between you and the Lord and cause you to
 - Hide from Him in shame
 - Separate yourself from Him out of anger
- This is exactly what Satan wants you to do

The problem of evil is much more than simply an intellectual problem

- Knowledge helps - but it does not heal the wound
 - The pain of it still exists
 - The experience of it goes beyond the intellect
- We can't seem to reach this pain and help the healing process along
 - It is just outside of our grasp
 - We just can't seem to remove the experiential pain from our hearts
- Only God can remove this pain
 - We are not sure how this works or how He does it
 - But He promises us - the peace He gives surpasses all understanding
 - He answers the experiential problem by removing it from our hearts
 - The memory will always be there, but the pain can be managed
 - **1 Corinthians 10:13** - *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it*
 - Give it time - Keep seeking Him - Don't ever stop
 - Confess your need / your anger / your frustration / your hurt / your pain / your bitterness
 - The Lord understands your struggle much more than you do
 - He understands your weakness much more than you do
 - DON'T allow the experiential pain to prevent you from seeking Him
 - Allow him to supernaturally heal you
 - Time does not heal wounds
 - Time itself heals nothing – in fact it often makes it worse
 - The believer's source of healing is a supernatural source, beyond our understanding
 - This is what we must trust and cling to

The Foundation for Counseling and the Problem of Evil

When suffering comes are way we are to remember:

- Jesus came to die to make sure that sin and suffering will end - He alone IS the answer
- Why? – because He took on our curse for us
 - The problem of evil is not based on our reasoning or what we can do for ourselves
 - But rather – the problem of evil is based upon our faith in what Christ has already done
- **John 3:14-15** - ¹⁴ *“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,* ¹⁵ *so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life*
 - Jesus is referring to the account spoken of in Numbers 21:4-9
 - The children of Israel were traveling through the desert
 - They began to murmur, complain, and became impatient
 - They kept saying they were brought out to the wilderness to die
 - God became angry with them
 - So He sends fiery serpents among them
 - They bit the people and the people died because of it
 - Moses comes before God to intercede for them
 - God commands Moses to make a serpent out of bronze
 - He tells Moses to lift it up on a pole in the middle of the camp
 - God then promises the children of Israel
 - That anyone who looked to the brazen serpent would be cured from the snake bite
 - What remedy does God give to cure the curse of sin?
 - What does God do to get rid of the problem of evil in this world?
 - We have all been bitten - we have all bitten other people
 - We have been affected by evil - we have committed evil against others
 - So what is the remedy for this?
 - The snake represents the curse
 - Evil exists because we have rebelled against God’s order
 - Christ was lifted up on the cross for us
 - Christ became a curse for us
 - The problem of evil has been answered by the cross of Christ
 - He bore our punishment for us
 - This is the only true injustice we see in Scripture
 - Not the suffering we experience because of evil done to us
 - We are not innocent
 - We all have sinned
 - We all deserve God’s judgment and wrath
 - Jesus did not deserve this
 - Yet – He willfully chose to become a curse for those who believe in Him
 - Jesus came to die to make sure evil will someday be eradicated
 - The answer to the problem of evil is the cross of Christ