

Why All the Pain and Suffering?

Lesson 1

Class Goals:

- To gain a biblical perspective on suffering in the world
- To better understand the character of God
- To respond practically to suffering around us in a Christ-like manner

1. Has there ever been a time when you wrestled with the problem of evil? What was the situation?

Philosophical Problem of Evil:

- (G) There exists a God who is all-good, all-powerful, and all-knowing.
- (E) Evil Exists

Logical Problem of Evil says:

“It is _____ to believe in a God who is all-good and all-powerful and all-knowing given the _____ that _____ in the world.”

Evidential Problem of Evil says:

“Given all the evil in the world, the _____ of there being a God who's all good and all powerful, all knowing is very _____.”

Ecclesiastes 7:15 says:

“I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness.”

One of the most common understandings about suffering in the world today is that bad things should happen to bad people, and good things should happen to good people. These next two questions help us evaluate that idea biblically.

2. What perspective do the following verses give on the idea of “bad things happening to good people”: Romans 3:9-20, Ephesians 2:1-3, 1 John 1:8
3. What do the following verses have to say about people getting what they “deserve”: Luke 13:1-5, John 9:1-3, Acts 28:2-6, Heb 11:32-40

A Few False Steps in “Solving” the Problem of Evil

Atheism – creates a bigger problem: if there is no God, what basis do we have for any outrage against evil?

Buddism - “solves” the Problem of Pain by blaming you for not thinking correctly. It’s caused by attachment and you need to learn to be detached.

Deism – “god” becomes so aloof and uncaring and is so removed from our pain that he couldn’t care less.

Pantheism – “evil” is an imperfection in reality that need to be removed by progressive self-realization, self-improvement, perhaps through reincarnation, but certainly through meditation, self-focus and self-improvement. “Evil” is just part of what is.

God Is Less Than Omnipotent – “solves” the problem by creating a “god” there is no use praying to and asking for his help as he is already doing the best he can, poor chap.

For more study:

How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil by D. A. Carson

Humanity & Sin by Robert Pyne

God, Freedom, and Evil by Alvin Plantinga