

The Problem Of Evil

The problem of evil is responsible for the creation of more atheists than any other factor. When bad things happen to “good” people, it hurts and we try to figure out why it happened. When we do not come up with a good answer, we often decide that God doesn’t exist. Every atheist I have personally known has experienced a profound hurt in their lives.

Important: The following is NOT instruction on how to minister to someone who has just experienced profound loss. In that case, we need to come along side them and just be there for them. Sit with them, cry with them, quietly love them. Perhaps pray with them.

This is information as to how to counter the argument that evil – bad things happening to seemingly good people – proves that God does not exist.

The Classic Logical Argument Against God

- a) An omnipotent God would be able to eliminate evil.
- b) An omniscient God would know how to eliminate evil.
- c) An omnibenevolent God would want to eliminate evil.
- d) However, evil exists.
- e) So, God of traditional theism doesn’t exist.

God could exist and not be powerful enough to eliminate evil.
God could exist and be unaware of some evil.
God could exist and not be opposed to evil.
Since evil exists, God cannot be all powerful, all knowing and all good.

Example: Rabbi Kushner in his book, When Bad Things Happen to Good People, argues that God is not all powerful.

The Free Will Defense

- 1) Are there things an all powerful God cannot do? YES!!!!

He cannot make dry water.
He cannot make a rock so heavy He cannot lift it.
He cannot make a married bachelor.
He cannot create a square circle.

God cannot do what is logically impossible.

- 2) World with moral good is better than a world without it.

3) But only free agents can do moral good.

4) Even God cannot create free moral agents who never do wrong.

Genuine moral freedom entails the possibility of going wrong.

It is up to free creatures whether or not they go wrong.

5) If free moral agents could not do wrong, they would not be free

6) If God routinely prevented people from doing wrong they would not be free

In reality, we want God to stop other people from doing evil, but would be very upset if He did it to us!

7) The classic argument ignores or denies human responsibility.

(If all evil was eliminated from the world, how many people would be left?)

8) We simply do not have the knowledge needed to judge God!

An Argument From Morality

1) To call God unjust requires an absolute standard of morality, not mere opinion or preference.

2) If God does not exist, there cannot be any absolute standards of morality by which we can call anything good or evil.

3) Yet there are some things that are absolutely right and absolutely wrong – and if only one such thing exists, so must God.

4) Conclusion: Therefore, in order to accuse God of being evil, we must effectively concede that He does exist

A Christian Defense

We cannot deal with this issue in isolation from other evidence and issues. If Christianity is true, and there is a great deal of other evidence that it is, then:

1) This life is NOT all there is!

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Cor 4:17-18 (NIV)

2) We live in a sinful broken world..... hence earthquakes, tornadoes, etc.

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 Rom 5:12 (NIV)

*For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.
Rom 8:19-21 (NIV)*

3) Sin has logical consequences

Some – not all – bad things in the world are a result of personal sin. God is not a cosmic killjoy. The things He tells us not to do are self-destructive and/or destructive to others.

“You shall not murder.” Exod 20:13 (NIV)

Clearly, this sin impacts others, the victim, their family and friends, the community and others. In addition, it damages the person who commits murder and results in some form of punishment should they be caught.

The Old Testament is filled with examples of the impact of sin.

4) God will put an end to sin

*Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”
Rev 21:1-4 (NIV)*

5) God, in Jesus Christ, entered the world and experienced evil first hand

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! Phil 2:8 (NIV)

*When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.
Luke 23:33-34 (NIV)*