

GOD'S NOT DEAD PART I

Unbeliever's Question: A God who allows horrible tragedies to happen to innocent people is not a god to worship. How can a loving God allow innocent people to be hurt so badly?

Question 1 has been asked so frequently by non believers that I cannot imagine there is a single Christian who has not heard this question used by an atheist to argue that God does not exist! It truly is a difficult question because it does not have an easy answer!

Why did God allow Hitler to have over six million Jewish people put to death in World War II?
Why did God allow the great plague of London in 1666 occur with about 100,000 deaths?
Why does God allow famines in Africa to claim the innocent lives of so many children?
Why does God allow approximately 200,000 new cancer diagnosis per year in Canada alone?
Why did God allow the Twin Towers in New York to be hit and countless lives lost?
Why does God allow evil to exist?

Seven Pillars of Truth about God

1 Corinthians 13:12 states we only see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror. We know our knowledge is incomplete. So when you speak about God to another begin by stating there are many things about God that you truthfully do not know. This will keep you from stating you know everything when in fact faith is required because there are many things that are beyond our knowledge. I believe in things that are unseen and as such are not provable by physical laws of nature. There are many things about God that He has chosen to not reveal about Himself. Some things are certain about God such as the following:

1. **Righteous.** God's character is loving, good and righteous. Genesis 18:25 states "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"
2. **Freedom.** God has given us freedom to choose to love or reject Him. Since you are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), like God you have the freedom to make choices. The problem with having the ability to choose is that one is also held accountable. Deuteronomy 30:10 states "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set up before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants."
3. **Fallen.** This freedom led to a fallen world with evil, sin and real dangers. Romans 5:12 states "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."
4. **Desire.** God intensely desires to restore fellowship with us. Isaiah 1:18 states "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool."
5. **His Son.** God's love was so great for us that He sent His Son Jesus Christ to restore that relationship. Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
6. **Sin Remains.** In our fleshly body and physical world sin remains. Galatians 5:17 states "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh;

for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”

7. **Resurrect.** In His resurrection Christ defeated sin. Hebrews 10:10 states “By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all

Illustration. Talk about a baby with severe diaper rash. You take your child to the doctor and he/she prescribes baths and ointments which of course require rubbing of towels and hands on the buttocks. Do you really think the baby understands when you have to apply the ointment or dry with the towel? Maybe but very unlikely the baby would understand anything but the pain he/she is experiencing. He/she are unlikely to know that there is bacteria living inside their skin that left unchecked will get more and more painful and could lead to death. In a similar manner when God offers the narrow path many avoid it because they feel the brokenness and pain of this world is all that can be obtained. Instead of embracing God’s help the atheists asks this wonderful molder of clay “why did you make us like this?” (Romans 9:20). The real question should be why do you rebel against He who can heal you?

7 Points Explaining Why Evil Happens to the Innocent

Point 1: Evil is Real and People are Blinded by their Sin

“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Being dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) the cross seems foolishness to those perishing in their sins (1 Corinthians 1:18). Non Christians hate the light and truth (John 3:19) and cling to lies that come from the god of this age (John 8:44). Isaiah 30:9 had it right when he said they are rebellious, deceitful people that are unwilling to walk with God on the narrow path (Matthew 7:13) because the broad path demands no allegiance but mere gratification of one’s own desires.

Are people not sinful?

Then why do we have to lock our cars?

Why are there police officers who carry guns?

Why are there metal detectors at airports?

Why do groups like Isis or the Taliban want so many people dead?

Even though this world feels they are wise their very best logic is foolishness in comparison to

God (1 Corinthians 3:19). Evil is real and humanity is infected with sin!

Point 2: His Ways are Higher than our Ways

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord, “AS the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-8

Our indignation, confusion, and questioning of God’s intent, motives and ultimate purpose for our lives is proof of our sinful nature ... we are blind.

Illustration: Job 1:1 states there was a man named Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. God blessed him with a large family and wealthy estate. One day God meets Satan and tells him there is no one like Job when it comes to righteousness. Satan tells God that Job only loves Him because of all the blessings that he has received. God permits Satan to remove those blessings – everything but his life. Job is soon left with his wife but no other family or possessions. Even his health is in jeopardy! Like us, Job wanted to know where is the justice in him losing everything and yet being innocent? To explain the calamities that Job faced his friends try to convince him he must have sinned and God was punishing him. Job refused the council and demanded God to come down and justify His judgement. Elihu reminds Job that questioning God is not a good thing – after all what can we say to God when we have so much darkness in our lives?” God appears out of the storm and asks Job and sums His case in one sentence: “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?” God goes on to ask Job a series of difficult questions like where were you when the God laid the earth’s foundations, who marked off the earth’s dimensions, and what holds the seas back so there might be land. Job quickly repented when he realized how absurd he was for questioning God.

A.W. Tozer states: “All God’s acts are done in perfect wisdom, first for His own glory, and then for the highest good of the greatest number for the longest time. And all His acts are as pure as they are wise, and as good as they are wise and pure. Not only could His acts not be better done: a better way to do them could not be imagined. An infinitely wise God must work in a manner not to be improved upon by finite creatures.”

We simply cannot understand justice because our finite minds are sinful and incapable of knowing the truth of His spiritual realm. You are not the Creator! Creation cannot tell the Creator how things are governed. Further more, even when God does not punish evil doers in this life time is it not more just to eternally punish the most heinous of crimes?

Point 3: There is no one Innocent, we are all Guilty

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless. There is no one who does good, no even one. Romans 3:10-12.

Since we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23), the question: “why does God allow the innocent to suffer,” is faulty because there are no innocent people. We have thumbed our noses towards God countless times in our lives. God has every right as our

Creator and the one whom we are sinning against to do whatever He wants to a rebellious people.

God could ask: “how could you break my laws when I created you in my image and gave you paradise? Or He could ask how could you break my laws so flippantly day in and day out when I sent my Son Jesus Christ to die for you? God has every right to punish or allow bad things to happen to anyone He chooses.

How many here have raised children? I remember when I was growing up from time to time my brothers and I like to fight. Remembering back I would like to perceive myself as the always being the innocent bystander but that was not always the case. One day after my brother had teased and me relentlessly and beaten me in countless play fights I decided to fight back. I picked up a rock, aimed and threw it in his general direction. Truthfully, I did not intend to hit him but to shock and horror and the rock landed square on his forehead. After having gotten over the stunning affect of the rock he came over and punched me in the stomach. Like most kids of age five or so I went running to mom to tattle. With tears streaming down my face I told my side of the story – without the rock of course in it. My mom was wise and brought in my brother to get the rest of the story. She soon found out that we were both in the wrong and as such both got punished.

This does not mean that every bad thing that happens to you in life is directly due to your sin but is one of the reasons we go through hardships.

4. Suffering can Lead to Repentance

For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:10

Often we need our hearts broken to see how much we need God. I was recently at a conference titled “5 Reasons that the Youth are Leaving the Church” by Dr. Sam Reimer. One reason that he gives for youth leaving the church is the abundance of resources we have. When I grew up we were poor. One of the best treats I ever got after church was an ice cream cone. Once or twice a year my dad would take us out for ice cream whether he could afford it or not. This was a treat because often money was in short supply. I remember mom and dad praying together that God would help them pay the mortgage or fix the car. They relied on God to survive.

Today we have so much stuff that we rarely rely on God for anything. Sin when living in abundance is often left unchecked, as if living for God was a nicety on Sunday but not a necessity. Suffering alerts us to our sin and we soon seek a cure for our illness. I remember when I was a young boy I got pneumonia really bad. I stayed awake all night suffering with a cough and times when I could not breath. Even though I really did not like the doctor very much back then with the pain that I was experiencing I got up first thing in the morning and asked mom: can I go visit the doctor? In a similar manner when we suffer due to sin we seek the Great Physician for healing. Even though discipline from God in the form of suffering is painful for a season, is it not an act of mercy by God when it produces repentance?

5. Suffering can Lead to a Deeper Dependence on God

But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as from the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18

Four reasons why God lets us suffer:

1. When we became Christians we were born again (2 Corinthians 5:17). We went through one of the most radical transformation processes a person can ever go through. In that moment we were sealed by the very Spirit of God (Ephesians 1:13) and we passed from death to life. This of course does not mean that the image of God in which we were created with was completely restored (Romans 12:2). Suffering can help us restore the image of God in our lives by encouraging our faith to trust in Him to grow (James 1:2). In other words, suffering and pain is often the training grounds of spiritual maturity!
2. One might be asked to suffer as a testimony to other Christians. During the time of Moses and throughout the Old Testament the people were taught that if they did good God would bless them and if they did evil God would punish them. One day the apostles meet a man born blind (John 9). They automatically assumed that someone had sinned so they asked Jesus the following question: who sinned: the man or his parents? Jesus responded by stating: neither the man nor his parents had sinned. The reason he was born blind so that God's work might be demonstrated in him. Sometimes we suffer for the sake of another person's faith. Instead of seeing this kind of suffering as injustice from God we should see it as an honour because He is giving us a chance to show.
3. Suffering can also teach us how to help other people. 2 Corinthians 1:4 says God comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are afflicted by showing them the same comfort that we ourselves have received from God.
4. While suffering can always help us or others become stronger in our faith, the final reason that God allows people to suffer is unknown to us. We simply cannot know everything about God anymore than Job could.

6. Suffering can Lead to a Deeper Dependence on God

You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
Genesis 3:4

In the first point I said that we are blinded by sin and we are responsible for doing evil. While we certainly cannot blame another for our sinful choices, Satan and his demons must take some responsibility. Paul in writing to the church of Ephesus reminded them the real battle was not against flesh and blood but against the dark powers of this world (Ephesians 6:12). 1 Peter 5:8 states we are to stay alert because the devil roars like a lion and seeks to devour whom he may. Satan fell from grace long before humanity did! This is not to be used as an excuse but as a cry

for accountability. There will be a day when the greatest deceiver ever will be thrown into the lake of fire forever for having gone against God (Revelation 20:10)

7. Consider God's Past Dealings

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of Scriptures we might have hope. Romans 15:4

Think about Noah and the flood, the Egyptian enslavement of Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylon's in 586 BC, Joseph being sold into slavery, the murder of babies by Herod and even the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In each of these cases bad things happened due to sin. After all, we are the ones who put Jesus on the cross! These were horrendous events but God turned them around and used them for the good of humanity.

Conclusion

In conclusion where is God when life falls apart? Is He a just God?

1. We are all blinded by sin and we therefore cannot know what is just or unjust.
2. His ways are higher than ours and we are incapable of knowing the answer to the question why. Furthermore, is not eternal punishment more just than temporary punishment?
3. There is no one innocent so the question why does God allow suffering to happen to innocent people is a false question.
4. What we can know is that suffering can be beneficial because it can lead to our repentance or
5. through perseverance maturity in the faith.
6. While we are to blame for sin existing in this world so is Satan and his demons.
7. Finally, we must stand in our faith knowing that God does good to those who love Him.

Always be ready to give the reason why you have hope in Jesus Christ.

NOTE: The seven pillars and seven points were provided by God's Not Dead DVD kit from Outreach. The points under each of these titles came both from myself and this kit.