

“Why Does God Allow Tragedy & Suffering?”

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Room for Doubt Series

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Introduction:

- A. Types of Evil
 - 1. Natural evil
 - 2. Moral evil
- B. Evil and the problem of believing in an all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful God.
- C. Initial considerations.
 - 1. When?
 - 2. *Particular* events and people?
 - 3. It's personal.
- D. Christianity offers “points of light” on the problem of evil and ultimately provides the best answer to it.

I. While the existence of evil is a problem for Christianity, it's an even bigger problem for atheism.

- A. A big difference between “evil” and suffering.
- B. Christianity must try to *answer* the problem of evil.
- C. Atheism cannot pose the *problem* to begin with.

Paul Copan: “If evil does exist, such a fact would point us in the direction of God’s existence” (*That’s Just Your Interpretation*, 91).

II. God is not the cause of evil and suffering

- A. Why didn’t God create a world without suffering?
- B. Why did God make suffering possible?
- C. Human freedom generates moral evil.

III. The existence of natural law greatly helps explain the existence of natural evil.

- A. Natural law.
- B. The connection between natural law and natural evil (Romans 8:22).
- C. Why natural law?
 - 1. The “dominion mandate” (Gen 1:26).
 - 2. Science is possible.
 - 3. Moral accountability is possible.

IV. Though suffering is never characterized as good, God can use suffering to accomplish good.

- A. “... all things work together for good to those who love God ...” (Rom 8:28).
- B. Bad interpretations of Romans 8.
- C. Examples.

V. God's long-term emergency plan is to eradicate evil and suffering.

- A. Why doesn't God eliminate all suffering NOW? (2 Peter 3:9)
- B. Why doesn't God do SOMETHING? (Matthew 26:9)

VI. All suffering must be understood in light of God's eternal, righteous, and merciful judgment.

- A. Never minimize the horror of pain and suffering!
- B. Consider God's chosen apostle Paul (2 Cor 4:17-18; Rom 8:18; 1 Cor 2:9).

Conclusion

- A. Compare Christianity and Buddhism on their response to suffering.
- B. Buddhism's "Four Noble Truths."
 - 1. All life is suffering
 - 2. Desire is the cause of suffering.
 - 3. Eliminate desire.
 - 4. Follow the 8-fold path.
- C. The Christian call (1 Peter 2:21; 4:16).