

Why Is There Evil? (Lord, I have a question...)

Intro: [announcements, specials, Commitment Sunday] Today we will look at several questions about evil, God, us, and the situation we find ourselves in.

I. Our Conception of God, Evil, and the Way Things Ought to Be.

A. In John Putman Demos' book "The Unredeemed Captive" he tells the story of several families in the late 1600's who moved into the American northeast. Indians broke into their homes frequently. Death, starvation, disease, and terror were a part of their everyday lives.

1. One night several Indians raided a settler's homestead. These were people who had come to the wilderness to worship their God and to take the message of Jesus Christ to the Indians.
2. Men were tortured, women raped, and the children were stolen. On the way out, casually and without any thought, the Indians swung the babies by their legs, bashing their heads against the doorpost.
3. The settlers' response? Sadness, mourning, loss, pain, unbelievable agony... but not anger against God. They assumed they lived in a dark place. They assumed that heaven came later.

B. Our perception of what God should or shouldn't do and when He should do it is skewed by our culture's demand on immediate action for the here and now.

1. Instant credit, instant information, instant communication.... And all problems solved in 30-60 minutes, usually via sex or violence.
2. Prosecutors nationwide lament what they call the CSI Effect. No matter your witnesses, if you don't have some "wow" science, juries don't convict.
3. We have been trained to want a different God; to demand our heaven now; to want this period of trials to be waived out of God's kindness.
4. God WILL prevail... but when? (Psalm 2:1-4)

II. The Questions

- A.** “When tragedy strikes a loved one, why don’t You step in more often to right what seems to be such a wrong?” The questioner adds in parentheses, “I feel like this is a silly question but I truly would ask if given the opportunity.”
- B.** First of all – I share your struggle with this! Let’s look at this a moment.
1. If you are talking about a matter of punishment and justice, it helps to remember the lessons of last week. We want God to stomp out evil and sinners as long as He spares us! We ask God for justice for others and mercy for ourselves.
 2. God’s patience brings salvation. And He calls us to be patient in return. (2 Peter 3:15)
 3. If you are talking about physical illness and injury, understand that much illness is our fault (bad living habits or our kindness in keeping people alive only so they can pass on genetic weaknesses to future generations – the AIDS/germ factory example).
 4. Remember – our bodies and this planet were designed to be temporary. We shouldn’t be surprised when we are reminded of it. (Exodus 15:26)
- C.** “Why did God put a forbidden fruit in the Garden? Did He not know Adam would eat from it?” Yes, He did. Then why did He put the tree there?
1. One of the great struggles and concerns I faced in my life was my beautiful daughter. Kara is pretty, sweet, smart, funny, and possessed of one of the most incredible souls. But how could I keep her from the world?
 2. One day I came upon the answer. I could make sure that she never had sex before marriage, never got drunk, never messed with illegal drugs, never rebelled against her parents’ authority. All I had to do was chain her in the basement.
 3. Instead, we gave her freedom (the driver’s license test). We knew that that was giving her license to harm herself or others, but love requires risk. It always has.

4. I don't make Kami account for every hour of every day, every dollar spent, or make her run her business decisions past me. Love requires us to have a relationship based on trust rather than chains in the basement.
 5. Besides – we want God to chain others in the basement, but not us. (Galatians 5:1)
- D.** “Why do the consequences of evil more often fall on the innocent than on those responsible? And I need a better answer than “it’s a fallen world.” AIDS hits women and children, not men. Drive-bys kills bystanders. Government policy hurts the poor, etc. Drunk men hurt their families and children. Drug abusing mothers pass on their addiction to their kids.”
1. Before we deal with the meat of this question, let's defuse some of its misassumptions. AIDS still hits gay men far more often than women and children. In fact, since 1985 when the blood supply was cleaned up AIDS is very rare among women and children in America. It is almost totally a disease caused by shared needles (women and children) or risky sex (men).
 2. Even in Africa, the UN and the WHO announced this week that the epidemic was overblown. While there is no discounting the tragedy, 0.6% of deaths in Africa are due to AIDS.
 3. But still... there is AIDS. I understand your point.
 4. And drive-bys? Almost entirely a criminal on criminal event. For example, 3385 kids were killed by guns in 2005. Of that number 2900 were 15-19 year olds involved in crime.
 5. But still, some innocents die. I get the point.
 6. Government policy hurting the poor? Sure! But we insist on it! Both left and right have failed on this and will continue to fail because we are removing our personal obligation and placing it on government. (ever walked by a poor person because of government programs?)

7. The real question is: why do we allow evil to continue? Don't punt this to the government. Make a difference. (the starfish story)
 8. Remember – this world is temporary and God said He was going to burn it up. He must have expected that burning would be necessary.
- E. "Why is there so much suffering?" Because we wouldn't have it any other way. What did you eat this week? Ever take a risk? Enjoy exercise?
1. This isn't a TV show and it won't be over in 30 minutes. This is our stage, our trial, our school. It is our mission field.
 2. See suffering? Be an angel.
- F. Another questioner focuses this. "Why do the innocents have to suffer? Hunger, extreme pain, cancer, abuse – sexual, physical, mental, confusion, etc. Why aren't the immoral left to suffer these problems instead of the innocent, unable to defend themselves, children? Adults? Ok, they're absolutely immoral, but children?"
1. This upset Jesus, too. (Matthew 18:6-7)
 2. This is one of those situations where we have to say that only God can see that piece of the puzzle. We are certainly given the mission of protecting children (personally, not through 3rd parties) and rising up against evil.
 3. Why is there such an epidemic of child sexual abuse? Remove the church, remove societal norms, reject all absolutes, and sexualize children, portraying them as little grown ups and see what happens.
 4. And almost all of that is done with our permission. (too harsh? No)

III. The Blood

- A. "Why did God require blood? The blood of animals – sprinkled, poured, spread on doorposts, etc. Why was the only way to God through Christ's suffering, bloody death? Why so much blood? Why only death?"

- B.** Do you think He might have been trying to tell us something? (the altar-sight and smell. The cries of the lambs) Hebrews 9:11ff)
- C.** God HATED this. (Isaiah 1) They why do it? Because it was the only way to get the message across: sin isn't cute, fun, or minor. It is evil and it has major consequences for everyone – those who participate and those who don't.
- D.** Do you rejoice in disciplining your children? Of course not. Neither does He – but He will do it.

Heaven waits for us. The settlers' response to great evil was to push forward in their mission. Mother Teresa's response to great evil and suffering was to offer healing, medicine, hugs, and love.

What is your response? Are you too busy joining the world in it's evil to move against it? The altar and the cross tell us that "going along to get along, to be popular and successful" is not acceptable.