

Apologetics: The Problem of Evil
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What is Evil?

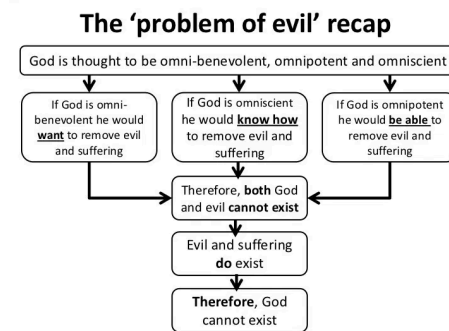
To begin any study of the problem of evil, a Christian must understand what evil is. There are two kinds of evil: moral and natural.

Moral evil is sin of rational creatures, such as murder, rape, abuse, terrorism, or genocide. John Frame refers to moral evil as “sin, the transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4).”

Natural evil includes earthquakes, tsunamis, famines, disease, tornadoes, horrific freak accidents and other types of suffering that do not necessarily arise from direct human or angelic deeds.

What are the logical and emotional problems of evil?

- **The logical-intellectual-philosophical problem of evil is the apparent tension in the following statements:** (1) God is all-powerful and all-wise, (2) God is all-good, and (3) evil exists.
- **The emotional-religious-existential problem of evil is the emotional and religious tension people experience when they or those close to them suffer.** People wrestling with the emotional problem of evil may ask God in desperation, “Why Lord?”



What are some inadequate (some unbiblical) solutions to the logical problem of evil?

The problem of evil can be so vexing for some that in order to find a tidy answer they are tempted to give away more than they should. The solution to the problem of evil cannot take place in a vacuum. The Christian must consider all of the biblical and philosophical truths that we know of God and this world.

- 1) **Evil is not real:**
- 2) **God is not all-powerful:**
- 3) **Freewill defense:**
- 4) **Character building:**
- 5) **God is the indirect (not direct) cause of evil:**

- 6) **God is above the law:**
- 7) **Ad Hominem:**

What does a biblical approach to the logical problem of evil include?

- 1) When seeking to answer the problem of evil it is helpful to understand the difference between a **Theodicy** and a **Defense**.
 - **Theodicy:** seeks or has the goal of justifying God's ways to men, of demonstrating His goodness of all of his actions.
 - **Defense:** seeks to show the problem of evil does not disprove the God of the Bible
- 2) **Bad things do not happen to good people; good and bad things happen to bad people.**
- 3) **The problem of evil is an argument for God, not against Him.**
- 4) **God is not obligated to explain the problem of evil to anyone.**
- 5) **God (not our sense of justice) is the standard for what He does.**
- 6) **The logical problem of evil (including providence) involves mystery.**
- 7) **God uses evil for a greater good.**
- 8) **God will triumph.**
- 9) **The most significant problem of evil is the cross.**

Understand what not to say to those that are suffering. (Andy Naselli)

- a. Don't say, "This must be happening to you because you committed some great sin."
- b. Don't focus on the loss of things instead of people (e.g., a house that burned down instead of a person who died in the fire).
- c. Don't speculate about what unforeseen problems this suffering may be sparing them (e.g., "Your boy might have grown up to be a rebel").
- d. Don't summarize present pain, "Well, everyone has to die from something. You just know in advance what it is."
- e. Don't assume you really understand and say, "I know how you feel." What is important is that you care.
- f. Don't rush in with, "Well Rom. 8:28 says that God works all things together for good."
- g. Don't assume that they are seeking an answer to the question "Why?"
- h. Don't assume that when people ask "Why?" that they are looking for a long, sophisticated answer.

Understand what to say and do when people are suffering. (Andy Naselli)

- a. "You must learn to live with this, but that doesn't mean you have to like it!"
- b. "God never promised to give you tomorrow's grace for today. He promised only today's grace for today, and that's all you need!"
- c. Show them that you really do care by spending time with them, listening to them, and tangibly demonstrating love over the long haul.
- d. Remind them of God's goodness, wisdom, power and love.
- e. "This is a fallen world, and suffering makes us realize sin's enormity and hate sin even more."
- f. Help them focus on someone else's needs. This has therapeutic value in confirming that they can help others, and it gets their eyes off themselves.
- g. "There is no necessary connection between your suffering and a specific sin you committed."
- h. "God is with Christians and genuinely sympathizes with them in their suffering."
- i. "False guilt often accompanies suffering, but Jesus died to take our guilt."
- j. Pray for them because only God can provide sufficient comfort.