

ASK

GENESIS
COMMUNITY CHURCH

“We ALL have questions. The questions we have help us to make sense of what we believe about God, ourselves, and the world in which we live. Questions are important, but even more important is where we go to get answers to the questions we ASK.

God is big enough to handle any and all of the questions we may ASK. He desires us to know Him and understand Him so that we might love Him as we walk with Him!” – Michael Davis

ASK

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USING THIS GUIDE:

Group Leader Instructions

In preparation for each study, take a few moments to read through the instructions below

Before The Group Meeting:

1. Spend some time in prayer before your group.
2. As you prepare for the study, read over the questions and think through how answering them for yourself could help you better walk with God.
3. Then, try developing two to three practical steps that would help members of your group also walk better with God. Avoid the temptation to simply recount information, but thoughtfully arm your group members with something tangible that they can do throughout the week.
4. In the closing moments of your preparation, ask the Lord to move mightily in your home or group setting. Without the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing, and we are utterly dependent upon Him showing up!

During The Group Meeting:

1. Begin with prayer. Ask for the Spirit to be present during the group.
2. Attempt to summarize this week's message, in a few, succinct, thoughts. (See summary below for an example)
3. Assign readers to read various Scripture texts.
4. Walk your group through the discussion questions. (Don't feel like you have to cover every question. Some questions will naturally be more relevant to your group than others, and will naturally produce more fruitful discussion. Be sensitive to the flow of conversation and either redirect or dwell longer upon a topic when it is necessary).
5. In response to questions, share stories and personal examples of how this has played out in your life. What did you learn? How did it help you walk with God? What fresh stories of God's power, love, mercy, or grace do you now have because you trusted Him?
6. Draw others out to share their own personal stories. What did they learn? What would life look like if they were able to live out this week's truth consistently?
7. End in a time of prayer, thanking God for the truths that He has revealed, and for the people that He has brought to your group.

WEEK 4

God And The Problem Of Evil

Today's Question(s):

- *"If God is all powerful, and could stop evil from happening, then why doesn't he? Does this mean God doesn't care? Or, that he cares, but cannot stop it?"*
- *"Why would God bestow a life of abuse, physical and sexual onto a child?"*

Sermon Summary:

The heart behind this series is not only that we would ask lots of questions, but also, that we would be able to see and experience God. Tons of people are asking tons of questions. But not everyone is walking away from his or her questions, with an encounter from God. For that reason, our hope is that you would not only ask great questions, but that you would have a great encounter with the living God!

Today, we are looking at God and the problem of evil, which is a question that has universally confounded skeptics and scholars alike, who have wondered, since the beginning of time, whether God and evil can coexist. Yet, this is also a question that cannot be answered with mere information alone, since the damage evil has caused, extends far beyond anything information, by itself, can satisfy. But, that is not to say there are no answers, only that our answers must go beyond mere information.

To do that, we must first admit that evil exists in this world. We must understand that all of us have felt it, seen it, and experienced it personally. Then, once we are satisfied that evil is real; we must wonder how all of us actually know this? How is it that every human being understands, implicitly and explicitly, that some things are "good" while some things are truly "evil"?

To answer that question, we must decide whether we believe that blind evolutionary processes – which are at mute, deaf, and dumb – have brought about this awareness, or if they were given to us by a good and moral God. Yet, because all of us know that good and evil cannot be properly explained by chance, we must admit that something beyond that is responsible for our understanding. Something beyond blind processes has allowed us to see when things are good, and to ache when we feel that things are evil. And, that something is God!

Next, if God is the one who created the standard of good, then we can have full confidence that He has not only placed it upon our minds, but that He has also told us about it in His Word. By turning there we learn the following things: **1)** The world was originally made as good place without evil (Gn. 1:31). **2)** Evil entered the world, when

man chose to rebel against God (Gn. 3). And, **3**) When evil entered the world, it so deeply changed mankind, that all people and all creation have now been re-made into a new image called sin.

Yet, while man was responsible for bringing evil into the world and continually choosing it over God, the Bible is clear that God graciously chose to redeem this sinful lot of people anyway. Instead of wiping all us out, or making us into robots (who had no free will), God spent the entire Old Testament engaging His wicked people and imploring them to draw near to Him. Yet, when man refused to draw near to God, God did the only thing He could do by drawing near to them. This leads to several questions.

Q: How did God draw near to man?

A: By sending us His only Son, Jesus, who endured the worst evil imaginable!

Q: Why was it necessary for God to endure evil personally?

A: So that He could proclaim His answer to evil!

Q: What was God's answer to evil?

A: That He hates evil so much that it had to be destroyed!

Q: Then why does evil still exist?

A: Because God loves us so deeply; He is unwilling for us to pay the penalty we deserve.

Q: So how does God satisfy His hatred of evil and His love for us in Jesus? How does the justice of God and the love of God come together in Christ?

A: It comes together at the cross of Jesus Christ. For, there, we see just how deeply God hates evil by pouring out His Justice and wrath upon His Son. But, it is also there, that we see how deeply He love us. Because, while we have brought a tremendous amount of evil into the world, and while we deserve the punishment for that, He has satisfied our debt by giving us Jesus Christ. You see, at the cross, we have been given a front row seat to view His love for us, and His hatred of evil. At that cross, He endured the worst evil so that He could give us peace.

Today, God is still providing an answer to the problem of evil He is still trying to show the world how His love and power collide at the cross of Christ. How? By allowing those who call upon the name of Jesus to suffer just like Him. Why? Because when we suffer, the whole world has a front row seat to the power of God alive in us. They are looking to us to give them an answer; an answer that goes beyond words, and is proved true by the way that we endure evil. This means that evil has a purpose, and God is allowing it, for a time, so that more people can begin walking with Him. With that, there is just one last question:

WHEN WE FACE EVIL, WILL PEOPLE SEE GOD IN US?

Verses to Consider:

- Psalm 97:10 – “You who love the Lord, hate evil!”
- 1 Jn. 5:19 – “We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one.”
- 1 John 4:4 – “But you belong to God... the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.”
- James 1:13 – “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.”
- Romans 8:20-21 – Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay
- Romans 5: 3-5 – “We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.”
- Gen 50:20 – “You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.”
- Gen 39:2-3, 21, 23 – “The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. Potiphar noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did... But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love... The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.”

Quotations to Consider:

- “The problem of pain has remained the single greatest question, not only for the skeptics who use it as an excuse to doubt God’s existence, but also for the believer who questions God’s purpose.” Ravi Zacharias – The Grand Weaver
- “Evil is that which is utterly opposed to God and, consequently, opposed to all that is good, loving, beautiful, kind and true.” Eric Metaxas
- Whenever you find a man who says he does not believe in a real Right and Wrong, you will find the same man going back on this a moment later. He may break his promise to you, but if you try breaking one to him he will be complaining ‘It’s not fair.’ C.S. Lewis – Mere Christianity
- “The infinite reference point for distinguishing good from evil can be found only in the person of God, for God alone can exhaust the definition of ‘absolutely good.’” R. Zacharias
- “Man, as God made him, was completely good and completely happy, but he disobeyed God and became what we now see. This condition was transmitted by heredity to all later generations, for it was not simply what biologist call an acquired variation; it was the emergence of a new kind of man – a new species, never made by God, that had sinned itself into existence.” C.S. Lewis – The Problem of Pain
- “Even when God doesn’t immediately tow us out of our suffering, the fact that He’s with us in it is at least the most impressive and satisfying answer to the problem of suffering that I know. God doesn’t give us a lot of words to answer the problem of suffering, according to Christianity, he gives us a single word, and his name is Jesus.” Peter Kreeft
- “God would not allow any evil, unless His wisdom and power were such as to bring out of it an even greater good.” Dr. Peter Kreeft
- “Joseph’s character was refined and strengthened by his trials. If God had not allowed Joseph’s years of suffering, he never would have been such a powerful agent for social justice and spiritual healing.” Tim Keller – The Reason for God
- “If we embrace the Christian teaching that Jesus is God and that he went to the Cross, then we have deep consolation and strength to face the brutal realities of life on earth. We can know that God is truly Immanuel – God with us – even in our worst sufferings.” Timothy Keller – The Reason for God

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you think that God views evil? Do you think that you are viewing evil in the same ways that God is? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever wondered why God would allow evil in this world? What types of questions were you asking God as a result of this? Do your questions for God change when everything seems to be going well for you and those around you?
3. Can you describe a time when something evil has been done to you? How did this make you feel? How did God use this in your life?
4. Why do you think it was necessary for God to deal with evil personally by sending Jesus?
5. What do you think is the appropriate emotional response to evil? Is that response consistent with the heart of God?
6. Can you remember a time when it felt like evil was going unpunished? Was it hard to believe that God was in control? Was it hard to trust that He still had a plan?
7. Michael said that evil sometimes happens to us, and to those around us, so that we will look more like Jesus at the end of it. Have you ever experienced this? Has God ever taken something evil that was used against you, and transformed you in the process?
8. Does the cross of Christ provide an answer to how God feels about evil? What does the cross also tell us about the way He views us?
9. How do you think God is using evil to refine your character in this season? Have you experienced a season of your life where God has used something evil to refine your character?
10. Is it easy for you to believe that God is with you while you suffer? How does the example of Joseph help you to see that God will not leave you! (See Gen 39:2-3, 21, 23).
11. How might God transform the evil that has been done by you or against you to help others walk with God? How can we face evil differently than people who do not know God?
12. When people see us enduring evil, what will they see? For instance, will they see God? Or, will they see more of us?

Guide To Prayer:

- Begin by thanking God. 1) For the stories that group members shared. 2) That His voice is the loudest voice when we suffer. 3) That His loudest answer to the problem of evil was given at the cross. 4) That God is not finished dealing with evil, and that one-day He is going to make all things new. And 5) That God, in the mean time allows Christians to show the world what suffering with Jesus looks like.
- Ask God to allow the group to endure evil well, and to let their lives display His love and mercy, even in the midst of their trials. Ask God to show us that our suffering is not wasted, and the He has a plan and purpose for it. Also, pray for those who are watching us suffer, so that they can see Jesus in and through us!
- Finally, ask God to forgive us for the times when we have doubted Him, and to help us to trust Him more fully!