



Good and Evil

PART 1



BUILD YOUR LIFE ON THE FOUNDATION OF 11 CORE BIBLICAL TRUTHS



Life Change Objective

To give you the truth you need to answer questions concerning the fact that we live in an evil world.

During these next two sessions we'll be looking at what the Bible says about the fact that good and evil exist alongside each other in the world today. There are many questions that are answered by understanding God's perspective on this truth:

- How could God allow such things as war and the death of children in the world today?
- If God is all-powerful and all-loving, why can't he stop evil?
- Why do bad things happen to good people?
- In light of what's happening in the world, am I just fooling myself to think that there is any hope?
- Will it ever end? When?

First we'll look at the overall problem of good and evil. Why does it exist in this world?

Next we'll look at the personal side of good and evil. How do I win the battle against evil in my personal life?

Why Does Evil Exist in God's World?

Three truths

1. God is good.

His _____ is good.

For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

—Psalm 100:5

His _____ are good.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

—Genesis 1:31

2. God is all-powerful.

Great and powerful God, your name is the LORD All-Powerful.

—Jeremiah 32:18 (NCV)

3. The world is evil.

Their sentence is based on this fact: that the Light from heaven came into the world, but they loved the darkness more than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

—John 3:19 (LB)

Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you.

—1 John 2:15 (LB)

How can all of these be true?

How could a good and all-powerful God create a world in which evil could exist and continues to exist? A lot of theological and philosophical jargon can be summed up in one simple sentence:

There is no _____ without _____.

God could have made a person who would never have chosen to sin, but then that person would have been denied the opportunity to choose to love.



A Closer Look

Two Truths to Remember

1. God is sovereign.
2. Mankind has free choice.

How do you reconcile those two? If God gives us choice, doesn't that put us in control rather than him? Our God is an awesome God! He is able to give us, as a part of his creation, a free will to decide and yet remain in complete control of his creation. How does he do that? He is God!

One warning: be sure to keep these truths in balance. If you lean too far toward God's being in control, you come down on the side of fatalism: it doesn't matter what we do. If you lean too far toward man's free will, you come down on the side of humanism: we are in control of our fate.

There are three reasons that evil exists in our world today.

God's Will: Because God _____

Evil

The problem of evil and suffering is possibly the single greatest intellectual challenge to Christianity. It's hard for people to understand how a great and good God could allow evil to exist.

1. He made a world in which evil _____.

In Genesis 3:

- God planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- God let Satan as a snake into the garden.
- God allowed Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit.

2. God allows evil to _____.

- God allows us to make evil choices.

So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.

—Psalm 81:12

- God allows painful consequences for the evil choices we make.

If someone sins and without realizing it does one of the things forbidden by Yahweh's commandments, he will answer for it and bear the consequences of his guilt.

—Leviticus 5:17 (NJB)



A Closer Look

God's Response to Suffering

The fact that God allows suffering does not mean he enjoys suffering.

1. He directly _____ some suffering. He is the punisher of evil (Isa. 13:11).
2. He has _____ for all suffering (2 Cor. 1:3–4; Lam. 3:22–23; Matt. 14:14).
3. He is willing to _____ for us in our suffering (Ps. 46:1; Heb. 4:16).
4. He develops our _____ through suffering (James 1:2–4; Heb. 2:10).
5. He will one day _____ all suffering (Rev. 21:3–4; Rom. 8:18).

Satan's Influence: Because Satan _____ Evil

The influence of Satan is a second reason why evil exists in our world today. Evil is not some new creation of Satan—Satan does not have the power to create anything. All he can do is to try to twist or to withhold what God has created.

Is weather evil?

Is ambition evil?

Is sex evil?

Is our ability to talk evil?

All of these are good creations of God. Evil is when Satan twists them into natural disasters, or war, or immorality, or slander.

We as believers need to be able to understand and defeat the enemy without glorifying the enemy. Satan has power, but he is also stupid. (Why else would he have sinned against God?)

Satan: a brief biography

Many of the ideas and pictures of Satan that we grew up with were influenced more by English literature such as Dante's *Inferno* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* than by the Bible. Here we're going to look at the straight story from the Bible about who Satan is.

1. He was an _____ in heaven (Rev. 12:3–9; 9:11).
2. He _____ from heaven due to pride.

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

—Revelation 12:7–9

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground—mighty though you were against the nations of the world. For you said to yourself, "I will ascend to heaven and rule the angels. I will take the highest throne. I will preside on the Mount of Assembly far away in the north. I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High." But instead, you will be brought down to the pit of hell, down to its lowest depths.

—Isaiah 14:12–15 (LB)

3. He has been given _____ freedom to influence the earth.

Satan's limit: he must ask _____.

Some examples:

- Job (Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6)
- Peter: "Satan has asked to sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31).

4. He is unalterably _____ to eternal destruction.

Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire, to be tormented forever.

And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur.

—Revelation 20:10

Mankind's Choice: Because We _____ Evil

Remember two truths:

1. Evil began with _____ (Gen. 3).

The choice that Adam and Eve made to sin had horrible consequences:

- If they ate of the tree they would “surely die.” Sin brings death: spiritual and physical death.

But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.

—Genesis 2:17

- Because they ate from the tree, they were banished from the Garden of Eden. Sin causes us to live in a fallen, imperfect world.

So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

—Genesis 3:23

- Adam and Eve passed along to us as their children a sin nature. Sin became a part of all of us when they bit into that fruit. That's why we all inevitably sin. We cannot refuse the temptation of evil.

This is called “original sin.” We don't start with a clean slate. We all start with the knowledge of good and of evil and with a flawed heart that causes us to sin.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.

—Romans 5:12

2. Evil is present in _____.

It's not just “their fault.” We need to be able to admit that “evil is present in me.”

When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

—Romans 7:21

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "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, not even one."

—Romans 3:9–12

The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties—but right through every human heart.¹

The Questions That Remain

Why does God continue to allow evil?

Why doesn't God stop it?

1. He already has defeated evil (1 Cor. 15:57; Col. 2:15).

He defeated evil at the cross and will allow us to join him in that victory for all eternity. We are fighting a battle in which ultimate victory is assured.

2. He is _____.

God has provided for the salvation of all (1 John 2:2).

God desires for all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3–4).

And he waits patiently, desiring all to come to salvation (2 Peter 3:9).



Key Personal Perspective

How do you answer someone when they ask you a question like: "How could a perfect, good, and all-powerful God allow wars and disease in the world today?" When faced with tragedy our first impulse is to ask, "Why? Why would God allow this to happen?" The study has reminded us of some of the answers, for ourselves and for others.

1. The world is evil, not because of God's creation, but because of mankind's _____.
2. God _____ about those who suffer.
3. It is God's proclaimed purpose to one day do away with evil.
4. The reason he waits is so that more people might be _____, therefore not having to suffer eternal separation from him.



Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think it's important that we be honest about the fact that we live in an evil world? What happens when we live in denial of the reality of evil?
2. Why do you think it was so important for God to give us free choice?
3. What is the difference between God allowing evil and God doing evil?
4. What is the thing that gives you the greatest hope and encouragement as you face personal suffering?
5. What has helped you to replace your fears of Satan and evil with faith in God?
6. Why is it unhealthy to always blame others for the evil in the world?
7. Jesus taught us to pray "deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13 NASB). In what circumstance would you like others to pray for you to be delivered from evil?