

OBJECTIONS TO GOD

1. PROBLEM OF EVIL/SUFFERING

If God exists why does evil and suffering exist? Why does he allow it to continue?

1. Defining Evil and Suffering

1. Evil refers to moral wrongdoing while suffering refers to experiencing pain, loss, grief, (death of a loved one, not knowing where you belong in the world, chronic pain)

2. Categories of suffering and evil

1. moral evil

- *murder, deception, thievery, violence, etc.*

2. natural suffering

- *earthquakes, tsunami's, tornados, blizzard, flooding, wildfire's, hurricane's, drought's, etc.*
- *disease, chronic illness*
- *conflict with animals*
- *existential suffering (who am I? Where do I belong? What is my purpose?)*

3. animal suffering

3. Logical verses emotional problem

1. Logical Problem of Evil

- *Sometimes the problem of evil is couched as a logical problem. If God exists then it's impossible for evil to exist so since evil and suffering does exist God must not. God and suffering are as logical as a square circle or a married bachelor. Logically, the two cannot co-exist at the same time.*

2. Emotional Problem of Evil

- *But most of the time when the problem of evil/suffering is brought up it is couched as an emotional problem. If God is so good or powerful, how can he allow suffering to happen or continue?*

4. The Christian response to suffering and evil in the world

1. *Human Freedom*

God created humanity with the freedom to choose. The evil and suffering we experience in this world is because humans perpetrate evil things. In the very beginning when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, they took *The Good* God created and desecrated it. Evil and suffering is when humans take good things

God gives us and contorts it into things he did not intend. Once Adam sinned, he plunged the entire human race into rebellion against God. The freedom God granted us; we use to do wrong and evil things.

Genesis 3.16, Exodus 1.7-14, Acts 2.23, 4.27-28

2. *Demonic Spiritual Forces*

Christianity is a supernatural religion. Christians believe that an unseen realm exists and in this unseen realm are angels and spiritual creatures. The Bible tells us that there are angels opposed to God, his purposes, and his people. The chief ruler of these dark angels is a person in the Bible called Satan. He goes by many names in Scripture but he and the angels and demons he presides over work against God and are able to influence people to do wrong and evil things.

Dan. 10.12-13, Mark 3.22-27, Eph. 2.1-2, I Pet. 5.8

3. *Jesus Suffered*

For Christians Jesus is not only our hope from the brokenness of the world, but he is also our example of how to suffer well. Jesus suffered. He received criticism from his opponents, his disciples continually let him down, his own family did not believe his messianic claims and thought he was crazy. One of his own disciples betrayed him, the other eleven left him when he was arrested and the pinnacle of his suffering was the cross. The unjust trial, the mocking, beating, and being nailed to a cross. Vulnerable, exposed, and weak. In addition to announcing hope, Christianity offers a Savior who can identify with us and our sufferings.

Matt. 26.47-27, II Cor. 5.21, Heb. 4.15, I Peter 2.21-23

4. *God's infinite wisdom*

The God of Christianity is a God who is maximally great. His attributes, specifically his wisdom is infinite, perfect, good, and unsearchable. God not only created the world and everything in it with power and might, but he created with understating. He created wisely. While we might think God could have created a world without evil and suffering, God chose this world. Our wisdom or insight is not as great as God's. We see a portion of the picture while God sees the whole thing. We can trust his wise ordering of the world.

Isaiah 55.8-9, Rom. 11.33, Isa. 40.28

5. *Mystery*

As human beings, we are limited and finite. We are creatures, while God the creator is unlimited and infinite. We only know of God and his world by what he has revealed. Deuteronomy 29.29 teaches that there are other things God has chosen not to disclose. He sees the whole plan, we see a speck. When we probe questions about God's relationship with evil and suffering there is unavoidably an element of mystery.

Deut. 29.29

6. *For our Good*

One of the promises of hope God gives to his people is that the suffering we experience in this life mysteriously works for our good. The bad things that happen to us somehow somehow work out for good, sometimes in this life but in eternity. Evil and suffering isn't a good thing in itself but in the hands of an unlimited God can be worked for the good and benefit of his people.

Gen. 50.20, Rom. 8.28, II Cor. 4.17, Jam. 1.2-5

2. DIVINE HIDDENNESS

If God exists why isn't his existence more clear or obvious?

1. This is a Universal Problem

The reality of Divine Hiddenness is not only a problem for skeptics but also for the faithful. God's people for ages have wrestled with the difficulty of not being able to sense God. To wonder where he is or what he is doing. The prime example of this is the Psalms and the pinnacle psalm that expresses this is Psalm 22.1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me..." which Jesus repeats on the cross. Both believer and unbeliever wrestle with the question why isn't God's presence clearer?

2. God's Presence Being Obvious Isn't a Guarantee of Belief

The Bible records two events that demonstrate God could make his presence and existence clear as day and yet it does not guarantee someone will undoubtably believe.

The first example is the Israelites who were freed from Egypt. This generation of Israelites probably saw the most miracles of anyone until the public ministry of Jesus. God's presence was explicit and on display unlike any time before. They witnessed the ten plagues, the parting of the red sea, God's presence on Mount Sinai, daily provision of food, water, and clothing, the pillar of fire at night, the cloud of smoke at day, and the glowing face of Moses. Yet we are told they complained, wanted to go back to Egypt, and even made an idol and worshipped it. The Israelites unbelief was so strong that they were denied entry into the promise land. Only their children could enter. Everyone from that generation except Moses and Joshua died in the wilderness. God's clear presence did not guarantee belief.

The second example is Jesus's twelve disciples. The disciples lived life with Jesus. They ate with him, heard his teachings firsthand, saw him perform miracles, etc. Yet the disciple's faith and belief was anything but strong in the gospels. The prime example of this is Judas. Judas lived with Jesus yet betrayed him.

3. Trust in God's Wisdom

As stated, earlier God's wisdom and ordering of the world is perfect and good. God is surely wiser than any person so if God thought it was wise and best that his

presence and existence be perfectly clear, obvious, and incontrovertible then he would do that. But the fact that he has not revealed himself that way should tell us it is wise and best that he doesn't.

4. We Will See God

The hope of Christianity is that one day his people will see him. The time of God's presence being veiled is only for a short while. In eternity we will see him and know him.

Matthew 5.8, I Corinthians 13.12, Revelation. 21.3, 22.3-4