

*If God Exists, How Can He Allow*  
***Suffering & Evil***  
*Part 1*



## *Why Study Suffering and Evil?*

# *If God Exists, How Can He Allow Suffering and Evil?*

- 1. For non-Christians, this is one of the most frequently cited objections / problems with Christianity.*
- 2. For Christians, this question often is the most serious challenge to our faith, and many don't make it through.*
- 3. Studying this question gives us a great opportunity to learn about our view of God and His character.*

## *The Classic Problem of Evil*

- 1. If God exists, then He is omniscient, omnipotent and benevolent.*
- 2. If God were omniscient, omnipotent and benevolent, then the world would not contain evil.*
- 3. The world does contain evil.*
- 4. Therefore, an omniscient, omnipotent and benevolent God does not exist.*

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*- The Malevolent God Theory*

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*- Rabbi Harold Kushner,  
"When Bad Things Happen  
to Good People."*

## *The Classic Problem of Evil*

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*- Open Theism*

# *The Progressive Questions of Suffering*

*Why me?*

*Why are You punishing me?*

*Why are You picking on me?*

*Maybe You aren't a God of love.*

*Maybe You don't care.*

*Maybe You're not fair.*

*Maybe You aren't there.*

*Adapted from D.A. Carson, "How Long, O Lord"*

## *Christian Explanations of Suffering*

- 1. Suffering is a test from God.*
- 2. We suffer to provide an example to others of how to live in the midst of suffering.*
- 3. Suffering helps us better sympathize with others.*
- 4. Suffering keeps us humble.*
- 5. We learn through suffering / God teaches through suffering.*
- 6. Through suffering, we learn to depend on God.*
- 7. God uses suffering to get our attention / speak to us.*
- 7. Suffering helps us grow in our relationship with Christ.*
- 8. Suffering is a form of God's discipline in our lives.*
- 9. Suffering is God's punishment on unrepentant people.*
- 10. Suffering furthers the work of Christ in this world (persecution, martyrs, suffering for the Gospel).*



## *God Allows Suffering Because . . .*

*You said . . .*

*God has given us free will, and our actions cause others to suffer.*

*God wants us to have faith, and to know His grace is sufficient.*

*Suffering draws our eyes in seeing our separation from good.*

*Suffering helps us develop better principled behavior, avoid judging others and makes us more willing to sacrifice unnecessary things.*

*Without suffering there would be no growth. Suffering allows us to depend on God.*

*Suffering makes us appreciate an eternity free of suffering.*

# *God Allows Suffering Because . . .*

*You said . . .*

*We live in a fallen, sinful world. Suffering results from original sin.*

*To stop suffering, God would have to stop a countless number of events, thoughts, words, and actions.*

*Jesus said God would not allow evil from the world until the end of time (parable of the wheat and weeds from Matthew).*

*Suffering allows us to seek God. It keeps us from self-sufficiency.*

*Suffering is caused by our lack of desire and will to do good.*

*God desires to defeat evil and show his character fully.*

# *God Allows Suffering Because . . .*

*You said . . .*

*There can be no ultimate good without evil.*

*The only way to have true goodness is to have the possibility for evil.*

*God allows suffering because through redemption He brings glory to Himself.*

*We are promised redemption and given a way out of suffering.*

*Some suffering comes from the fact that we are stewards of the earth and choose to do nothing out of our own selfishness.*

*Suffering exists so we appreciate the contrast to God's goodness.*

*God Allows Suffering Because . . .*

*Number One Answer :*

*Free Will*

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*Suffering & Evil*

# *God Allows Suffering Because . . .*

*Number One Answer :*

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*4/5 of Suffering is  
Caused by the Free  
Will Of Humans*

*C. S. Lewis*

# *God Allows Suffering Because . . .*

*Number One Answer :*

*Free Will*



## *Looking Closer at Free Will*

*Could God have created a world in which there was no evil?*

*Could God have made a world inhabited by beings with the power to choose good or evil in which no one would ever have made the wrong choice?*

*Could God have made a world inhabited by beings with the power to choose good or evil in which no one was capable of making the wrong choice?*

*If God "knew" that humans would sin, is He responsible for the evil and suffering which results because He went ahead and created us?*



## *Looking Closer at Free Will*

*Christian: God gave us free will so that we could love Him. He loved us first, and our free will allows us to choose to love Him in return.*

*Response: As a result of allowing the for the possibility of evil, death and suffering will come to every person. Most people will end up suffering in hell for eternity. All this because He didn't want to restrict our free will? All this so a few could love Him in return freely?*

## *Looking Closer at Free Will*

*If we value free will so much, then why do we ask God to intervene into our lives to miraculously prevent the evil caused by others?*

*If God occasionally intervenes to change the course of things, why does He do so only selectively and not all the time?*

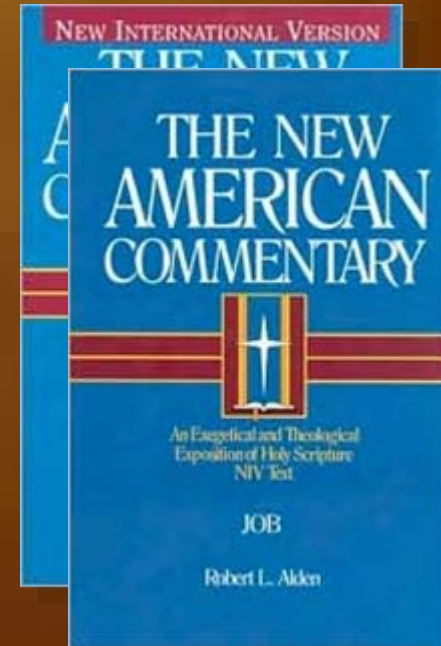
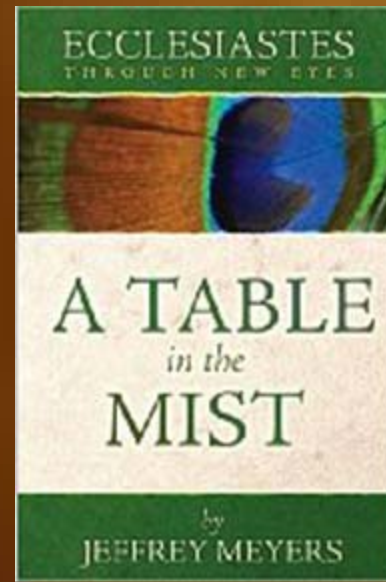
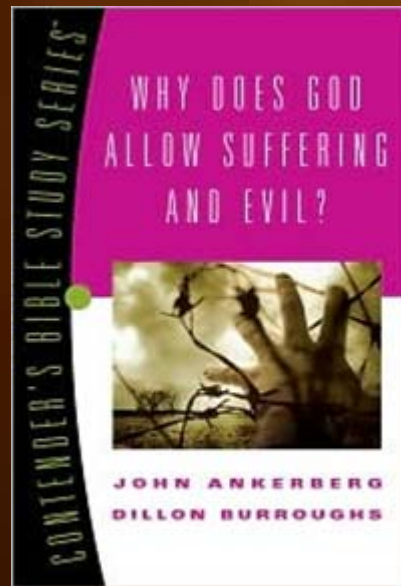
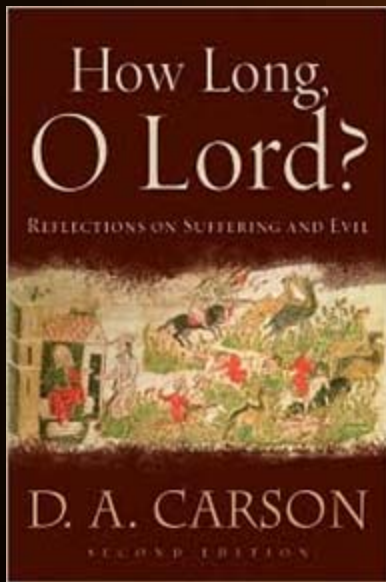
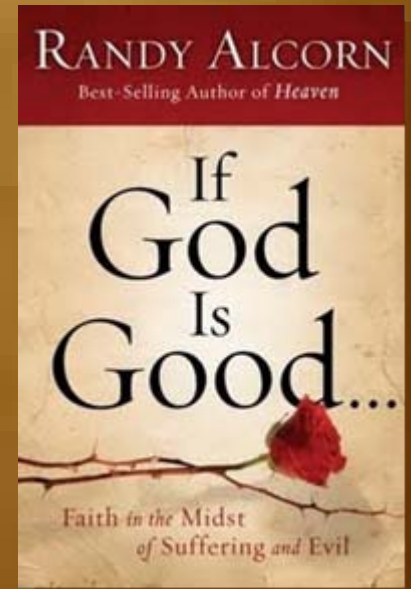
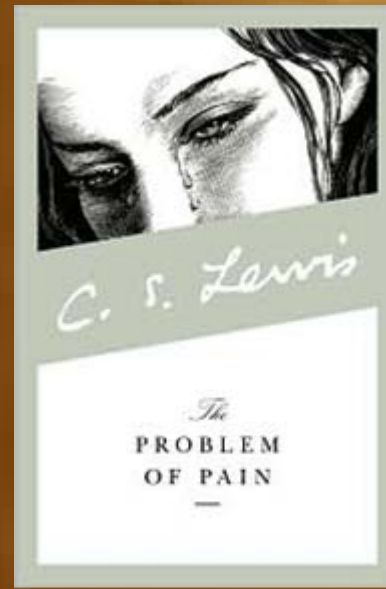
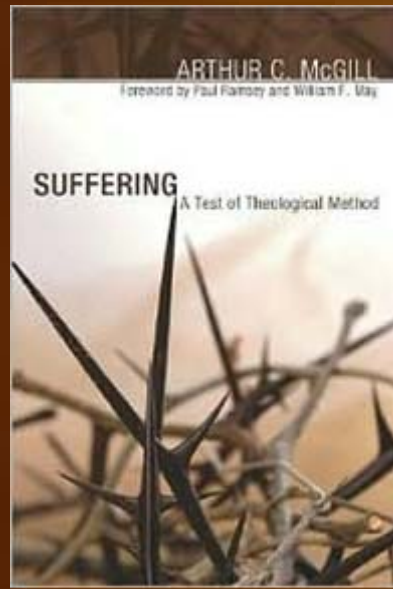
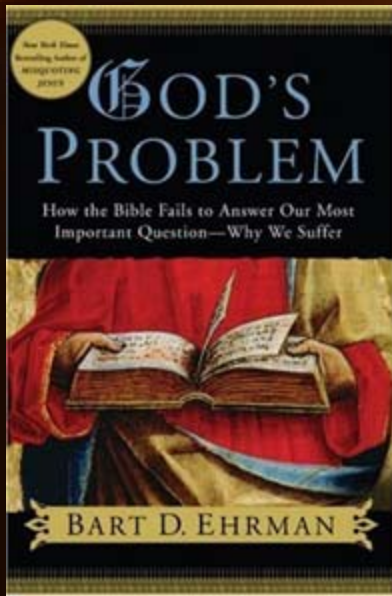
*Setting aside arguments over free will and responsibility, what forms of suffering cannot be explained by free will?*

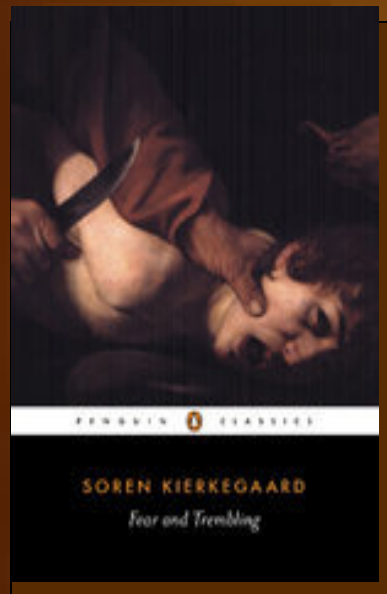
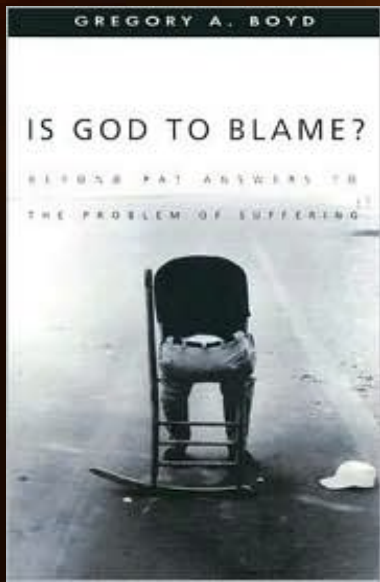
## *Next Week*

*How did the Biblical writers deal with suffering and evil?*

*What about natural evil?*

*Does God actually cause suffering, or simply allow it?*





TBD

TBD

TBD

TBD



## INTERACTIVE



Participate, ask questions, talk back...

What if we listened to what everyone had to say — and discovered that God can speak through us all? After all, we all learn better when we talk things out, hear different points of view, and give room for the Spirit to speak through our deliberation.

[Read more](#)

## THOUGHTFUL



Test everything, hold on to what is good...

Many hours of research are dedicated to prepare each one of our series. We explore the scriptures, the breadth of Christian scholarship, contemporary authors, and consider a wide range of sources outside of our faith.

[Read more](#)

## FAITHFUL



Set apart Christ as Lord...

We all have questions. But we learn together in a way that tackles the deepest part of our doubts while making sure that our purpose is clear: to always know the reason for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, and to be prepared to share that answer with everyone who asks us about that hope.

[Read more](#)

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