

Argument of **evil**: (Epicurus)

- If God is willing to prevent evil but not able, then He is **not all powerful**.
- If He is able to prevent evil but not willing, then He is **not good**.
- But if He is both willing and able, **how** can evil exist?
- If He is neither able or willing, then **why** call him God?
- It is logically impossible for God and suffering to **both** exist.
- Suffering and evil **exist**.
- Therefore, **God** does **not** exist.

This argument has two false assumptions .

1. God and evil cannot coexist .

And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of **good** and **evil**. *Genesis 2:9*

2. There is no good purpose for evil.

As for you, you meant **evil** against me, but God meant it for **good**, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. *Genesis 50:20*

The argument uses a premise which their philosophy denies .

“God’s only excuse for evil is that he does not exist.” — Stendhal

So, what is the answer?

1. The problem of evil points toward the reality of God, not away from him.

“My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my fancies.” — C.S. Lewis

“A capacity for neonaticide is built into the biological design of our parental emotions...If a newborn is sickly or if its survival is not promising, they may cut their losses and favor the healthiest in the litter.” — Steven Pinker, *Why They Kill Their Newborns*

2. God has a good purpose for evil and suffering.

God is gathering a community of people from every nation and ethnicity who have freely chosen to love him and trust in him.

“When He was a man, He played the man. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace and thought it well worthwhile.”

— Dorothy L. Sayers

One Year New Testament Devotionals

Group Prep

In preparation for small group, read Genesis 37:18-28 and Genesis 50:14-21, then answer the following discussion questions.

Introduction

According to a recent poll, if people could ask God one question and receive an answer, the question would be “Why is there pain and suffering?” The world is filled with evil, which many see as evidence against the existence of an almighty, loving God. How can we reconcile faith in God with the so much corruption in the world?

Discussion Questions

1. What types of pain and suffering do you see today? What types are you currently experiencing and how have you responded? Has the presence of pain and suffering been a hurdle for you to have full confidence in God? If so, how?

2. Why do you think people see the presence of evil as proof against the existence of God? Describe the argument atheism uses to prove the presence of evil discounts the existence of God. Do you see any holes in this argument?

The atheistic argument presents two assumptions—God and evil cannot coexist and there is no good purpose for evil. Why are those assumptions false?

How did Joseph suffer? Read Genesis 50:20. What perspective do you gain from Joseph’s story? Have you seen God use your pain and suffering for something good? If so, when? How can we take steps toward gaining this type of perspective?

3. Dallas Willard says, “When making disciples, you must remove any thoughts that cause you to have a lack of confidence in Jesus Christ’s design for your life.” Has the presence of evil been a hurdle for you to have full confidence in God? If so, how?

Is there anyone in your life that has said “no” to the existence of God? If so, who? Which of the concepts discussed can help you engage with them? Are there any steps you can take toward having a conversation about God with them?

4. Has this talk and discussion helped you clarify that evil and faith actually work together? If so, how? Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.” What steps can you take this week to change your perspective, engage with a non-believer, or stomp out evil?

My action step is _____.

I will encourage and pray for _____ to follow through, and their action step is _____.

My memory verse is _____.

This coming week, I’m praying for _____.

Outreach: Groups in Action

Donate diapers or gently used children’s items to the Love One ministry. These items will help support families who foster children in need. Drop them off at the information desk during one of Emmanuel’s weekend services.

Your entire small group can serve our weekend service guests by restocking the connection cards and offering envelopes found in the auditorium. Register for a Wednesday evening by emailing Kerry Carmichael at kcarmichael@eclife.org.