

SCRIPTURE TRACK

Week 6 Problem of Evil/Suffering

Philosophical Problem

- Pain, evil, and suffering exist
- It shouldn't be like this
- Man's attempts to understand suffering

	Moralistic	Self-transcendent	Fatalistic	Dualistic	Secular
Cause	Wrongdoing	Illusion	Destiny	Cosmic conflict	Accident
Response	Do good	Detachment	Endurance	Purified faithfulness	Technique
Resolution	Eternal bliss	Enlightenment	Glory & honor	Triumph of the light	Better society

“What is this great symbol of the Christian faith? It’s a symbol of suffering. That is what the Christian faith is about. It deals head-on with this question of suffering, and not one other religion in the world does that. Every other religion, in some way, evades the question. Christianity has, at its very heart, this question of suffering.” Elisabeth Elliot, *Suffering is Never for Nothing*

- Man's desire is to control pain

“Suffering removes the blinders. It does not so much make us helpless and out of control as it shows us we have always been vulnerable and dependent on God.” Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*

Sin broke the world

- Sin broke our relationships with God and others
- Sin broke creation
- Sin broke our bodies
- Sin broke our minds

Jesus came to redeem us from the curse of sin

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“Jesus’ entire mission was to take evil on and end it. But as we have seen evil is so deeply rooted in the human heart that if Christ had come in power to destroy it everywhere he found it, he would have had to destroy us too.” Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*

DISCUSSION

Maybe it’s not a philosophical question for us. Maybe the question is: How am I supposed to get through this?

Why did this happen?

Realize we live in a broken world – John 9:3

Check my heart for sin – John 5:14

Where is God?

- To love is to invite suffering – John 3:16
- Jesus put on skin – Hebrews 2:14-18

“I now regard pain as one of the most remarkable design features of the human body, and if I could choose one gift for my leprosy patients it would be the gift of pain.” Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *The Gift of Pain*

- Jesus suffered “many things” – Matthew 16:21
 - Grief
 - Rejection
 - Betrayal
 - Loneliness
 - Separation from His Father
 - Temptation – Hebrews 2:18

How can I respond?

- Learn to trust Him
 - “But there was no one thing in his life that God was after. In fact, that was the point of Job’s suffering. He was being led to the place where he would obey God simply for the sake of who God is, not in order to receive something or to get something done.” Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*
- Allow Him to refine my character - Romans 5:3-4
- Reorder my loves

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DISCUSSION

How can I respond?

- Trained in compassion – Corinthians 1:2-4
- Showing me how to care for His body

C.S. Lewis: "...what is good in any painful experience is, for the sufferer, his submission to the will of God, and for the spectators, his compassion aroused and the acts of mercy to which it leads." The Problem of Pain

Philippians 2:1-4

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

The way through brokenness is, and always has been, to break the sufferer free from the aloneness of the suffering by choosing to participate in the suffering with them—koinonia—choosing to stand with the suffering, stay with the suffering, and let it all be shaped into meaning that transcends the suffering. Ann Voskamp, The Broken Way

"God allows evil just enough space so it will defeat itself... God has now mapped out a plan for history that includes evil as a part of it. This confuses and angers us, but... God will allow evil only to the degree that it brings about the very opposite of what it intends." Timothy Keller, Walking with God through Pain and Suffering.

Resources:

Walking with God through Pain and Suffering by Timothy Keller

The Gift of Pain by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey

Suffering is Never for Nothing by Elisabeth Elliot