Your Greatest Doubts and Fears
How to Keep the Faith When Facing Life's Toughest Questions

#4: Does the existence of evil and suffering in the world mean that God doesn't exist?

Intro: Where were you when ….?

I. What is the Problem of Evil?

A. The General Problem

1. If God were all-good he would *want* to prevent all evil.
2. If God were all-powerful, then he would be *able* to prevent all evil.
3. Evil exits.
4. Therefore, an all-good, all-powerful God cannot exist.

C.S. Lewis: "If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore, God lacks either goodness, or power, or both."

B. Dividing the Problem

1. Intellectual Problem: Does the existence of evil proof the Christian God doesn't exist?
2. Emotional Problem: How do I handle, or cope with, the pain of evil? Will things ever be made right?

II. Resolving the Intellectual Problem of Evil

A. Free Will Defense?

B. A Better Solution

1. Challenge premise 1: "If God were all-good he would *want* to prevent all evil."
   - This premise only works if God has *no good reason* for allowing evil
   - But what if God did have a good reason? Then premise one fails
   - What if someone said, "Good parents would never let their child feel pain"?

2. What if the skeptic says that God couldn't possibly have a good reason for allowing evil?
   - But the skeptic is not in a position to know what is possible or impossible?
   - Just because a person can't *personally see* a reason, doesn't mean there can't be a reason

3. So, are there any good reasons God might allow evil?
   - God uses suffering to shape our character (1 Pet 1:6-7)
   - God uses suffering to punish the wicked (Gen 6:6)
   - God uses suffering as an opportunity to display is glory in redemption (John 9:3)

4. Remember, sometimes God has a purpose for suffering that is not evident at the time but revealed at a later point

    - Joseph didn't know why God allowed him to be sold into slavery, but it was revealed later that God intended this to rescue Jacob's family from famine (Gen 50:20)
    - When Christ suffered, it wasn't clear at the time that it had a good purpose. But God uses this evil act of people killing Jesus to save many lives

C. Who Really Has a Problem Explaining Evil?

"My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of "just" and "unjust"?...What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?...Of course, I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if 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 private fancies …Consequently, atheism turns out to be too simple." --C.S. Lewis

III. Resolving the Emotional Problem of Evil

A. One of the greatest opportunities for Evangelism

B. Things to Share with the non-Christian

1. God hates evil even more than we do

2. God suffered evil himself on the cross

3. God will set things right in the future

Class Schedule:

Jan 9: Doubting Christian: What Role do Doubts and Fear Play in the Christian Life?
Jan 16: [Class cancelled for snow]
Jan 23: If Christianity is True then Why do so Many Intelligent People reject it?
Jan 30: Does saying Jesus is the Only Way Make us Arrogant or Intolerant?
Feb 6: Does the existence of evil and suffering in the world mean that God doesn't exist?
Feb 13: Some parts of the Bible seem morally troubling—are we sure it's a "good" book?
Feb 20: How Do I Deal with Depression and Anxiety About the Future?
Feb 27: Missions Week, Combined Sunday School
Mar 6: If Christianity is true, then how we do explain the bad behavior of Christians?
Mar 13: Isn't Christianity just the same as all the other religions? What makes it different?
Mar 20: What if the Gospels are just made-up stories? Is it possible everything we believe is a lie?
Mar 27: Lots of Christians are "deconstructing" their faith? Does that mean Christianity isn't true?
April 3: What do I do if Christianity Just isn't working for me?
April 10: What if I am Not a Christian? How Can I Know for Sure?