

Questions for Lesson 11: Pain, Suffering and God

1. How do trite answers on the problem of human suffering hurt people?

Answer: By giving unsympathetic, quick, inadequate cliches to people who are sincerely hurting.

2. Atheists criticize God on the basis of the suffering that is in the world. What answer can an atheist give as to why these things occur?

Answer: Dawkins answers by saying the evil doesn't exist and that suffering is just the nature of our existence. In other words it is a chance response to the nature of the physical world. The bottom line is that atheists have no positive answer to this question--they simply say you have to bear it because that's the way it is. As Christians we have a positive answer to the problem of pain, suffering, and evil and it is tied to the reason we are here. God put us here to minister to one-another and to prepare us for better things which He has in store for us. (More on this in lesson 12 "Why Am I Here?" See also www.WhyPain.org.)

3. What are some wrong answers to why tragedies happen to Christians?

Answer: God cannot stop it. God does not want to stop it. God caused it (it is God's will). God is testing you. It is because you are weak. It is due to your sin (which may be true, but not always). More on this in the next program.

4. What causes a vast majority of human suffering?

Answer: Man's failure to use his intelligence and to follow God's plan covers a vast percentage. That means that greed, selfishness and exploitation are major factors.

5. How does our poor use of the environment contribute to this aspect of the problem?

Answer: Pollution and abuse of nature has caused many diseases and disasters.

6. Why does God not prevent us from suffering the consequences of what we do?

Answer: Because that would prevent us from being free moral agents and from being able to accomplish what we were created to do. (See the next lesson for more on this.) Love can only be possible because we have a choice. Rape is the classic proof of the fact that only with choice can there be real love. Being human instead of a robot or a puppet requires us to be able to make choices.

7. Give biblical examples of people who suffered because of their mistakes.

Answer: Adam and Eve, Abraham, David, Judas.

8. Give examples of people who did not cause their own problems.

Answer: Job, Jesus, the blind man in John 9:1-3.

9. Why is it that suffering has to exist for us to survive?

Answer: Physical pain is a design feature in the world to protect us from what is hot, sharp, etc. Emotional pain and spiritual pain make us able to love, forgive, and function in the ways that bring out the best in us.

10. How does our view of death and pain affect our perception of life?

Answer: For atheists, this life is the best they are ever going to have. For Christians, this life is the worst they are ever going to have to endure. That difference will have a radical effect on how we live, die, and what we do in life.

11. Give the parity form for each of the following:

| ITEM | ANSWER |
|--------------|----------------|
| Left | Right |
| Plus | Minus |
| Natural Body | Spiritual Body |
| Love | Hate |
| Good | Evil |
| Matter | Antimatter |
| Id | Ego |

12. Where did evil come from?

Answer: Evil is a consequence of God's existence. Since God exists and God is love and God is good, then there has to be the absence of love and the absence of good. This is called evil.

13. Did God create evil?

Answer: No! Such an idea is alien to the nature of God. God tempts no one. Evil is a consequence of good, not a deliberate creation of God. Isaiah 45:7 is translated "I make peace, and create evil" in the King James Version. The Hebrew word translated "evil" in that version is *ra*. It actually means "adversity, affliction, calamity." The context indicates that God allows adversity to happen when He brings judgment on those who do evil.

14. Is evil equal to good? Is this a dualism?

Answer: No! Good is associated with God, but evil did not have a vehicle through which it could act until Satan and his angels chose to embrace it. There is no dualism. Pornography has no force unless it gets into someone's hands. If no one looks at the porn, it has no effect. Evil is the same way.

15. Why did God not create us and angels so that we could not choose evil--so that sin was impossible?

Answer: Because we would not have the ability to do or be a part of many other things that are important and of great value. Love is the most important of these.