

Prepared to Answer

“How can there be a good God when the world is such a bad place?”

Read John 1:1-5

He got old. That young man who leaned on Jesus' chest the night before the cross, the one who bested Peter in the early morning dash to the tomb—the first one to see the empty grave clothes and believe their mute testimony—finally slowed down.

That John got old is not a remarkable fact all by itself. But then consider that he was the only one of the 12 disciples to accomplish it. He endured, with a mix of sadness and swelling joy, the brutal martyrdom of most from that intimate circle of friends. History records how the people would carry John, the last living link to the One and Only, up to the front of their assemblies so he could deliver his sermon in five words.

"Little children, love one another."

The man had the mind of Christ. And the day arrived when the Breath of Heaven moved John to write it all down and gave John the very words for the gospel that bears his name. And so he wrote his marvelous treatment on the subject of Jesus, his Lord and his Friend, so that we would know and believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The hand moved. The page filled. And this is what it said:

"In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not under stood it."

More Prepared to Answer, p. 8-9

1. Why might someone ask the question, “How can there be a good God when the world is such a bad place?” (What are they really struggling with?)

If a God who is good and powerful truly exists, why wouldn't he stop all the terrible things happening to people in our world? He must either be impotent, unloving or non-existent.

2. Give some examples of events in our world which people might find especially incompatible with the concept of a good and powerful God.

Innocent victims of violent crimes, disease, disaster (crack babies, scammed senior citizens, etc.)

3. Agree/disagree: For some, the question, “How can there be a good God when the world is such a bad place?” is used to deny the existence of God.

Agree. Because they know the latter half is true, the former is called into question.

4. If there were never such thing as light, would people ever ask, “Why it is so dark around here?” Why or why not?

No. They can't miss what they never knew existed. The lack of light would only bother them if they had some concept of the benefit of light.

5. When people complain, “It's not right that the world is so evil,” what are they unwittingly admitting? They are admitting that there is such a thing as goodness. They are expecting that there be a certain standard that “someone” should maintain. They are implying the existence of “divine justice, fairness, right.”

If I didn't think there is a god, I would have no reason to expect that things should be good. But because I expect things to be good, I'm unwittingly admitting the existence of God.

6. If someone says, "The world is such a bad place; therefore there must be no God," you might respond, "How do you know the world is bad?" What would be your point?

"Against what standard are you measuring the world? That unspoken, objective standard of goodness is in fact God." Something is bad only when it can be measured against the standard of perfection. (e.g. 27 is not a bad grade until measured against the scale of 100)

7. Consider: "Our visceral complaints about the dark are our unwitting homage to the Light" (p.10).

8. Read Genesis 1:31; 2:15-16; 3:4-6; 3:17. In light of these passages, formulate a Biblical answer to the question, "How can there be a good God when the world is such a bad place?" or "How can the world be so bad, if God is good?"

God in goodness gave mankind a free will. Man chose to do evil. Man is to blame, not God. (e.g. if a father really loved his son and could have taken away the car keys, why did the boy wreck the car? Because he used his freedom to get drunk and wrap the car around a tree.)

9 In our world, freedom of choice is regarded as something very good; using force to take away that freedom is regarded as something bad. How did God prove his goodness in Eden?

God gave man a free will, the opportunity to willingly do good (or evil)

10. Sometimes when people say, "How can there be a good God when the world is such a bad place?" they really mean, "When I look at the world, I don't see a good God." (It's hard enough to live in an evil world. To live in an evil world without God besides—that's unbearable.) Where should people look to find the good God they need and desire? (cf. John 3:16)

Look to the cross where God proved his love for evil people by dying for their sins.

11. How does denying the existence of a good God alleviate the heartache of evil in the world?

It doesn't. It just makes sorrow hopeless and suffering meaningless.

12. How does believing in the existence of a good God alleviate the heartache of evil in the world?

God has paid the price for the evil in me and others. Human suffering is temporary. God will use it for my good. Heaven is my home.

13. In the diary of renowned atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair are repeatedly scrawled the words, "Somebody, somewhere, love me!" Why?

Deny the existence of a good and gracious God and you lose any hope of being loved unconditionally. If God is light and you deny the light, you're doomed to emotional and eternal darkness.

"How long, a LORD? Will you forget me forever? ...How long must I...every day have sorrow in my heart?" So wept David, a man after God's own heart, in Psalm 13.

It is sad but true that many people question God out of sheer arrogance and raw unbelief. But, if you're a Christian, do not let your own heart condemn you. There is also a questioning that arises not from unbelief but from Faith. It is precisely the fact that you know he is Good and you know he is Right and you know he is Love...that your very soul cries, "Then why, dear God!?" And the answer he gives reaches beyond the realm of words and ideas. He gives himself. The answer is God on a cross, crying "Why?" with the whole world, crying for the whole world from no safe distance away. It is him then standing on the other side of the grave, beaming, "Don't be afraid." *p. 13*

14. So, how are you prepared to answer the statement, "How can there be a good God when the world is such a bad place?" 1. Man abuses the free will that a good God gave. 2. Don't look to actions of man to prove God's goodness; look to God's actions on a cross.