



Serving the **T**ruth in a **L**ove **S**andwich

The Problem of Evil

God is good, why are things so bad?

1st Peter 3:15 "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

This series of courses is about answering difficult questions about Christianity. As disciples of Jesus Christ we have a responsibility to be prepared to defend our faith. We are *not* going to study what Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists etc. believe. We are going to study the truth, not lies, except for a few of their questions, which often have lies as their basis. I hope as we go through these lessons you will create your own personal statement of faith, so you will have a clear idea of what you are defending.

However, as we study, remember God's truth is spread more heart to heart than mind to mind. Since we have minds, they must also be included in the communication, but never forget to serve the truth in a love sandwich.

In this course we hope to show that the so called "problem of evil" is a problem for the unbeliever, not for us. Without God's word there is no way to distinguish good from evil. All we have is preferences, what we like, and what we do not like.

Lesson 1 – A good God would destroy evil

Lesson 2 – An all-powerful God would destroy evil

Lesson 3 – Evil is not destroyed

Lesson 4 – Therefore, there cannot possibly be a good and powerful God

Lesson 5 – Evil was a necessary risk so we could have Free Will

Lesson 6 – Evil is temporary, Good is permanent

Lesson 7 – God often uses Evil against itself

Lesson 8 – Bonus Lesson – Atheist Attacks

Suggested methodology for each lesson:

1. Fellowship (Save most of this for the end of class.)
2. Take prayer requests (Try to keep it from becoming a competition to see who has the most or the worst.)
3. Pray (The idea here is to leave our troubles with God so we can give His word our attention with a clear mind.)
4. Read the lesson's text aloud from the Bible. (... or a few verses at a time as you answer the questions.)
5. Answer and *briefly* discuss the "fill in the blank" questions. (Let those who prefer to listen, listen. My answers on the next page are just one opinion; you may have a better answer if it is based on Scripture.)
6. On the final "Think & Pray" question everyone should take a few minutes to pray over it and jot down their own thoughts before the discussion. **This will give the Holy Spirit a time to speak.**
7. Discuss your "Think & Pray" answers. (Never force anyone to share theirs. As with the other questions, my answer is just one more opinion; you may have a better answer.)
8. Close in prayer (It is best to call on others to pray, but try to get their permission ahead of time.)
9. Fellowship (Leave this as open ended as possible for the time and place you meet.)

Depending on the number of people, each lesson is expected to take about one hour. Steps 4 thru 7 are about half of that. If you take longer, let each lesson take more than one meeting, or consider breaking into two groups. The final "Think & Pray" question should always be covered, because that is when everyone takes a quiet moment to listen to the Teacher, the Holy Spirit. If you take less time, extra questions are provided for discussion called "For Further Thought"

Copyright Information

All content of this training course not attributed to others is copyrighted, including questions, formatting, and explanatory text. **Copyright © 2018 by Thor F. Carden. All rights reserved.**

Illustrations and photographs by Trish Carden Copyright © 2018 by Patricia S. Carden.

All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Course Logo and Other Illustrations by Troy Cunningham Copyright © 2014 by Troy Cunningham. All rights reserved.

Used by permission. <http://www.lovebiblestudy.com/Troy/art.htm>

Illustrations by Jeff Larson Copyright © 2000-2018. All rights reserved. Used by permission. <http://www.thebackpew.com>

Illustrations by Michael D Waters Copyright © 2006-2018. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

<http://www.joyfultoons.com>

Quotes from GotQuestions.org © Copyright 2002-2018 Got Questions Ministries - All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

NASB or **NASV** (New American Standard Bible) Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

NIV (New International Version) Scripture taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

HCSB® (Holman Christian Standard Bible®) Some scripture may come from Holman Christian Standard Bible, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Holman Christian Standard Bible, Holman CSB®, and HCSB are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

----- PRICE INFORMATION -----

This material is provided at no cost. You have permission to print and copy these course materials as much as you like as long as you keep the contents intact with the copyright information on this page. You do not have permission to copy the art work and embed it in other material.

Other free Bible courses are available at <http://www.LoveBibleStudy.com>

Additional Reading

These lessons are designed for small groups or individuals to use without reference to other materials besides the Bible. However, a lot more could be gained if those involved would do some additional reading between class meetings. (See <http://lovebiblestudy.com/CC/Library.htm>)

We plan to provide specific recommendations with each course at <http://lovebiblestudy.com/TLS/Adjunct/> We also hope to be making specific chapter recommendations from various Christian books that have helped us in our understanding of apologetics, but are not entirely about the topic of the course. Such as these books which would make good companions for this entire series of courses.

Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist by Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek

The Case for ... series of books by Lee Strobel

Cold Case Christianity, *God's Crime Scene*, and *Forensic Faith* – 3 books by J. Warner Wallace

Also, some books do dovetail nicely with particular courses. These books would work very well with this course,

If God, Why Evil?: A New Way to Think about the Question by: Norman L. Geisler

Can God Be Trusted?: Faith and the Challenge of Evil by John G. Stackhouse

Introduction to the Problem of Evil

(Introductory Question) Why do people ask questions like, "How could God let evil exist? Why do bad things happen to good people?" Do their motives matter? Why?

Think & Pray _____

Let's break it down and look at the details:

Assumption: A good God would destroy evil.

Assumption: An all-powerful God could destroy evil.

Observation: Evil is not destroyed.

Conclusion: Therefore, there cannot possibly be a good and powerful God.

At first, this seems very logical. I used to believe it completely. That was before I met God and realized I was being arrogant to imagine that I, a fallen and sinful creature, could understand how a perfectly good being would or should behave. Let's take each statement one at a time.

Lesson 1 – A good God would destroy evil

In this lesson we plan to examine the assumption that a good God would destroy evil.

Read these scriptures and answer the associated question:

(1A) 1 Pet. 1:7 When our faith is tested or proved what will we receive at Jesus' return?

(1B) Rev 21:4 What five things are scheduled for destruction at the end of time?

(1C) 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 What are we not to lose? _____.

(1D) **A good God would destroy evil.** Do you agree with this assumption? Why or why not?

Think & Pray _____

For further thought:

[1e] *Atheist Attack:* God is a liar: In 2nd Thessalonians 2:11 God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false. How do you know God has not made you delusional? How could the Bible be "God's Word" when it admits, chapter and verse, that God was a deceiver and a swindler of people? By these acts, God is the perfect model of a liar, which teaches followers to lie in direct violation of His Own commandment. How would you respond to this attack? (Hints: Ezekiel 12:2, Mark 4:9)

----- SOME POSSIBLE ANSWERS -----

(Your answers do not have to match exactly.)

(Introductory Question) The question comes in many forms but it basically boils down to this, "If God is so Good why are things so Bad?" There are at least three reasons people ask this question. (1) Some people want to use the existence of evil as an excuse not to believe there is a God. (2) Some people believe in God but are angry at Him for something that has happened to them or to someone they love. (3) Some people are just confused by this apparent paradox. It seems impossible to them that an all-powerful good God would allow any evil to exist. We cannot assume we know which of these reasons drives the person to ask such a question. Indeed, it is entirely possible he has motivations other than these. So, we must be sure our answer is wrapped in love.

Lesson 1 – A good God would destroy evil

(1A) 1 Pet. 1:7 When our faith is tested or proved what will we receive at Jesus' return?

praise, honor, or glory

(1B) Rev 21:4 What five things are scheduled for destruction at the end of time?

Tears, death, mourning, crying and pain

“Is Everything Sad Going to Come Untrue?” asked Sam Gamgee in the Lord of the Rings. According to Rev 21:4 the answer appears to be, “Yes.”

(1C) 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 What are we not to lose? Heart We are not to become discouraged.

(1D) **A good God would destroy evil.** If this were the end of time this assumption would be valid. The simple answer is God is not done yet. The correct way to state this assumption is "A good God will destroy evil" or "Our good God is destroying evil." It is as if they observe a half finished building still under construction and decide, since it is not complete, the architect is an idiot.

“They say of some temporal suffering, ‘No future bliss can make up for it,’ not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory. “

— C.S. Lewis, The Great Divorce

“I believe like a child that suffering will be healed and made up for, that all the humiliating absurdity of human contradictions will vanish like a pitiful mirage, like the despicable fabrication of the impotent and infinitely small Euclidean mind of man, that in the world's finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments, for the atonement of all the crimes of humanity, for all the blood that they've shed; that it will make it not only possible to forgive but to justify all that has happened.”

-- Fyodor Dostoyevsky – The Brothers Karamazov Chapter 34

My further thoughts:

[1e] My Response: God hides the full truth from His enemies. What is wrong with that? The lesson for us is to not be His enemy. Let's suppose for a moment that the Bible did say God was a deceiver and swindler. It doesn't, but just supposing. How is God being someone you don't like, proof He does not exist?

An alternative response to this objection might have been to ask him to prove lying is evil. Without God's Word, it can't be done. Evil is a bigger problem for atheist than theists. Either way how could I have better served the truth in a love sandwich?

Lesson 2 – An all-powerful God would destroy evil

In this lesson we plan to examine the assumption that an all-powerful God would destroy evil

Read these scriptures and answer the associated question:

(2A) 1 Pet. 5:6-7 Who cares about what we suffer? _____

(2B) 2 Cor. 1:3-7 Who comforts us when we have troubles? _____

(2C) Matthew 26:38 How did Jesus feel about his coming torture? _____

(2D) Ps. 34:18 Who is near and saves those who are troubled? _____

(2E) Psalm 1:4-6 What will happen to the wicked? _____

(2F) **An all powerful God could destroy evil.** Do you agree with this assumption? Why or why not?

Think & Pray _____

For further thought:

[2g] *Atheist Attack*: "If you must accept Jesus as your Savior in order to be saved (John 14:6), what about the billions of beings that die as fetuses, infants, and people with brain damage, etc.? For them to accept Jesus would be impossible. So they are sent to hell because of conditions over which they had no control. Deut. 32:4 says God is just, but where is the justice?" How would you respond to this attack? (Hints: Matthew 19:14, Deut 24:16)

[2h] *Atheist Attack*: "The Bible says that God and Satan are one and the same. 2 Samuel 24:1 says God incited David, and 1 Chronicles 21:1 says Satan did. Who or what exactly are you worshipping?"



----- SOME POSSIBLE ANSWERS -----

(Your answers do not have to match exactly.)

Lesson 2 – An all-powerful God would destroy evil

(2A) 1 Pet. 5:6-7 Who cares about what we suffer? God

(2B) 2 Cor. 1:3-7 Who comforts us when we have troubles? God

(2C) Matthew 26:38 How did Jesus feel about his coming torture? It grieved him, made him sad.

Why would He endure this torture and pain if it was not necessary?

(2D) Ps. 34:18 Who is near and saves those who are troubled? The Lord

(2E) Psalm 1:4-6 What will happen to the wicked? They will not stand in the judgement

(2F) **An all powerful God could destroy evil.** It is true an all-powerful God could destroy evil. As we just saw in the first lesson, He is doing so. However, modern man, because he is surrounded by the blessings of God (probably resulting from a Christian culture), has gotten used to immediate gratification. They demand, "Why not right now?" They are impatient for results and mistake God's mercy and patience for lack of resolve or ability. Evil is rebellion against God. Death and other things we call evil are the consequences of this rebellion. Could God squash this rebellion instantly and bring all evil to an end? Yes. But in His patience and mercy He has not done that. Yet. When He does, the ones most vocally criticizing Him for not doing so sooner will be the first to go. According to Psalm 1:4-6 wicked and evil people will cease to exist.

My further thoughts:

[2g] My response: John 14:6 "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'" Matthew 19:14 "But Jesus also said, 'Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'" God does not condemn the innocent.

The Atheist Retort: Exodus 20:5 sounds like God is condemning the innocent to me. This part is deliberately left out whenever you hang up the Ten Commandments on public walls.

My response: I also do not like the editing of the Ten Commandments. You have misconstrued what is being said. Each of the generations hate Him by their own choice. When they do choose to hate Him, they have to bear the consequences of their parents' sins as well. God is warning us that if we sin, that our descendants will suffer from it. It is the way of the universe. How can you complain when you have been warned? If someone wants to break the chain of hatred and rebellion against God that has passed down from generation to generation, all they have to do is stop hating Him and stop rebelling.

Atheist Retort: "Let's read Exodus 20:5 again: '... I ... am ... visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children...' God says here that he sees to it that children of sinners suffer. Could the text be clearer?"

My answer: God finds your particular misinterpretation of Exodus 20 to be particularly repugnant. Read Ezekiel 18. If a man gets drunk and beats his children, they suffer. If he gambles away the family's food money, the children suffer. It is the way things are. God is making people aware that their sinfulness has consequences for their loved ones. Don't you know that?

Besides you are not reading the whole sentence in Deuteronomy. Look at the next verse. '... showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.' Each generation is offered mercy if they will cease to rebel." How could I have better served the truth in a love sandwich?

[2h] God's authority extends even over Satan. God can use Satan to accomplish His ultimate will by simply giving permission to Satan to do that which Satan already desires to do. David was prideful and God knew it. He sent a test so that David would realize his sin and repent.

Lesson 3 – Evil is not destroyed

In this lesson we plan to examine the assumption that evil is not destroyed.

Read these scriptures and answer the associated question:

(3A) 2 Cor. 12:7 Why did Paul think God did not remove his suffering? _____

(3B) 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 What is the result of Paul's trials? _____

(3C) Romans 9:18-24 Who has the right to do as He pleases? _____

(3D) Isaiah 49:15 Will God forget us? _____

(3E) John 11:35 What did Jesus do? _____

(3F) Psalm 9:16-18 Who will not always be forgotten? _____

(3G) Mark 7:15-23 What comes from the human heart? _____

(3H) **Evil is not destroyed.** Do you agree with this observation? Why or why not?

Think & Pray _____

For further thought:

[3i] *Atheist Attack*: "There is deer in the forest that breaks its leg. It lies in a bed of pain for several days until it dies. How could God allow this? Since things like this do happen a good and all-powerful, God does not exist." How would you respond to such an attack? (Hint: Mark 7:15-23)

[3j] How do you interpret Romans 9:18-24? Do you find this passage comforting? Why or why not?

[3k] Is Mark 7:15-23 talking about you or someone else? How do you know?



----- SOME POSSIBLE ANSWERS -----

(Your answers do not have to match exactly.)

Lesson 3 – Evil is not destroyed

(3A) 2 Cor. 12:7 Why did Paul think God did not remove his suffering?

To protect Paul from becoming prideful or conceited

(3B) 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 shows Paul establishing credibility because of the trials he endured.

(3C) Romans 9:18-24 Who has the right to do as He pleases? God

(3D) Isaiah 49:15 Will God forget us? No How comforting!

(3E) John 11:35 What did Jesus do? Jesus cried or wept

Why would He endure this sadness if it was not necessary?

(3F) Psalm 9:16-18 Who will not always be forgotten? The needy

(3G) Mark 7:15-23 What comes from the human heart? evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.

(3H) **Evil is not destroyed.** I agree that evil exists. The fact that we are concerned about good and evil is proof that God does exist. Without God, there is no such thing as good and evil, only personal preference, pleasant and unpleasant. Without God to tell us which is good and which is bad, all we have is what we like and what we do not like. When we appeal to some universal code of good and evil, we are implying that there is Someone who created that code. You cannot have law without a Law Maker.

Most arguments from non-believers that are based on the problem of evil assume that pain and/or death are evil. The only arguments I have ever seen to support these ideas seem to boil down to pain and death are evil because we do not like them. Without the Bible to explain that death is the punishment for sin, what is evil about death? It is something that appears to happen universally to all living things. Without God's word to let us know about eternal life, where would we get the idea that death was something that could or should be avoided? Pain is usually important information. It tells us of danger and allows us to withdraw from things that are causing our bodies damage. Pain teaches us to avoid self-destructive behavior. How is that evil?

My further thoughts:

[3i] Do you see how self-contradictory such an argument is? Since they find such a thing nasty, God can not exist. What!? God can not exist unless we approve of him? It would be a lonely world indeed if only those people of whom we approve were allowed to exist. I agree these events are terrible, but I do not see how *unbelievers* can say that they are terrible. Apaches used to torture animals and people just for fun. Spartans used to leave their babies, which did not meet their physical standards, lying in the sun to die of exposure. Today people strap explosives to themselves and kill themselves and innocent people to try to make some political or religious point. Without God there is no universal code of good and evil. People that see events such as the ones described above as evil probably do so because they grew up in a culture heavily influenced by the people of God. What basis does an unbeliever have to call this evil?

According to Mark 7:15-23 evil comes from inside the hearts of men. Things that it would be wrong for us to do are not wrong for God to do. It is not evil for God to kill. Our lives are a loan He has the right to recall at any time. It is not morally wrong for Him to do anything to us at all. We were created by Him and continue to exist by His power. He has no moral obligation to continue to allow us to exist, or to continue to do so in any particular state of wellness or lack of pain. The death of the deer described above seems cruel to us, so why does God allow it? That is, perhaps, a valid question but do not imagine that God is answerable to us. Nor does a lack of an answer to this question prove he is not good, not all powerful, or not there. All it proves is that we do not know the reason God does what He does, and we do not like not knowing. In Job 40:1-4 God likens being questioned by Job to being instructed and reproofed. When Job realized that is what he had been trying to do he repented and was quiet.

Lesson 4 – Therefore, there cannot possibly be a good and powerful God

Read these scriptures and answer the associated question:

(4A) Gal. 6:2 What are we supposed to do when we see others struggling? _____

(4B) John 9:1-3 Why was the man born blind? _____

(4C) Psalm 119:71 Why did the Psalmist think it good to be troubled? _____

(4D) Hebrews 12:4-15 What does God do with his children? _____

(4E) Psalm 62:8 – What are we encouraged to do?. _____

(4F) Romans 12:17-21 How are we to overcome evil? _____

(4G) Ps. 23 Who comforts us in the middle of overwhelming evil? _____

(4H) **Therefore, there cannot possibly be a good and powerful God.** Do you think this is a valid conclusion based on our discussion in the first three lessons? Why or why not?

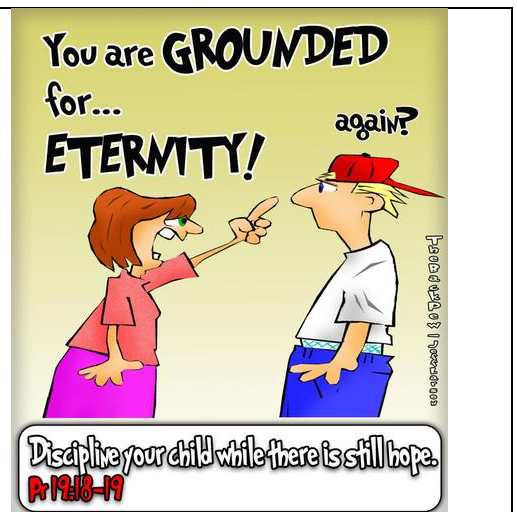
Think & Pray _____

For further thought:

[4i] *Atheist Attack*: "None are Good: How could Jesus be our model of sinless perfection when he denies he is morally perfect in Matt. 19:17 'And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good, there is none good but one, that is God'?" How would you respond to this attack? (Hint: John 10:30-33)

[4j] *Atheist Attack*: "God is nasty: Malachi 2:2-3 The Biblical God said: 'I will send a curse upon you. I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already. Behold, I will corrupt your seed and spread dung (feces) upon your faces.' Can you imagine this Biblical God defecating in His hand and smearing it all over your face? Can this truly be your Biblical 'God of Love'? Can you explain why?" How would you respond to this attack? (Hint: Malachi 2:1-5)

[4k] Hebrews 12:4-15 says God disciplines His children? How has He disciplined you? What happened? What did you learn?



----- SOME POSSIBLE ANSWERS -----

(Your answers do not have to match exactly.)

Lesson 4 – Therefore, there cannot possibly be a good and powerful God

(4A) Gal. 6:2 What are we supposed to do when we see others struggling? Help them

This encourages Christian fellowship.

(4B) John 9:1-3 Why was the man born blind? so that the works of God could be shown in him

(4C) Psalm 119:71 Why did the Psalmist think it good to be troubled? He learned God's law

(4D) Hebrews 12:4-15 What does God do with his children? He disciplines them.

(4E) Psalm 62:8 - We are encouraged to share our suffering heart with God.

(4F) Romans 12:17-21 How are we to overcome evil? With Good.

(4G) Ps. 23 Who comforts us in the middle of overwhelming evil? The Lord

(4H) Therefore, there cannot possibly be a good and powerful God. I hope you can see, there are no valid assumptions or observations to support this conclusion. But it begs another question; "Why did God allow evil in the first place?" Nor is cold logic comforting to someone in the midst of suffering. (Remember; what appears to us to be angry and arrogant disbelief may in fact be confusion and intense pain.)

My further thoughts:

[4i] My Answer: It is not a denial of perfection. It is a claim of divinity.

The Atheist Retort: I read and reread the verse, but I can't see by what rhetorical somersault your explanation make sense. Please elaborate.

My response: The loaded question! If I explain it, I am demonstrating rhetorical somersaults. If I do not explain it, I am accused of not having an explanation. By what rhetorical somersaults can you possibly understand this to be a denial of perfection? He does not mention perfection. He speaks of goodness.

How could I have better served the truth in a love sandwich? (Perhaps I should have explained that Jesus was giving the young man a chance to do what he really needed to do; recognize Jesus for Who He is. Jesus was, in effect, asking him, "Do you realize Who you are saying I am when you call Me good? Are you saying that I am God?")

[4j] My response: What Malachi 2:2-3 actually says is "If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name," says the LORD of hosts, "then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart. Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it." The picture here is one of God being so disgusted with their constant partying that He pushes their face down in a plate of leftovers.

However, the word could validly be translated dung instead of refuse. "Oh, no, God said, 'do-do.' I am undone!" If a dog is being difficult to house train sticking his nose in it is often effective. I'm glad we have a God who loves us enough to do whatever is necessary to bring us to repentance.

How could I have better served the truth in a love sandwich?

Lesson 5 – Evil was a necessary risk so we could have Free Will

(Introductory Question) The previous lessons demonstrate that evil does not disprove God's existence. **But why did God create evil in the first place?** (Hints: John 9:1-3, Rom 9:20)

Think & Pray _____

Read these scriptures and answer the associated question:

(5A) Deuteronomy 30:19 What were they encouraged to choose? _____

(5B) Numbers 35:11 What were they do for themselves? _____

(5C) Joshua 24:15 What did Joshua choose? _____

(5D) Proverbs 3:31 What are we not to choose? _____

(5E) Isaiah 7:15-16 What is required in order to be able to refuse evil and choose good? _____

(5F) Psalm 119:45 What gave the Psalmist liberty? _____

(5G) 1 Cor 8:9 What is dangerous about our liberty? _____

(5H) 2 Corinthians 3:17 Where is there liberty? _____

(5I) James 1:25 Obeying what law makes one effectual and lead to blessings? _____

(5J) 1 Peter 2:16 What are we not to use as a covering for evil? _____

(5K) Galatians 5:13 Is Evil a necessary risk of Free Will? Is Free Will necessary in order to Love? Why or why not?

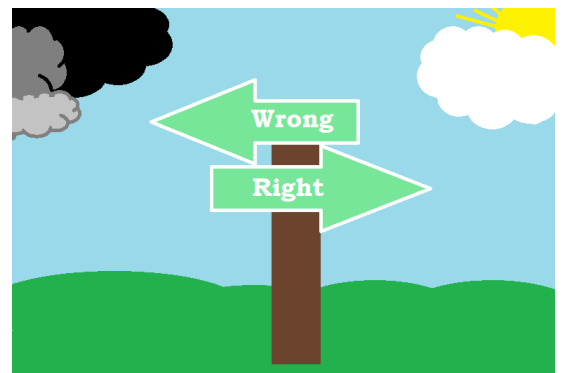
Think & Pray _____

For further thought:

[5l] *Atheist Attack*: "There is too much crudeness in the Bible: If the Bible is our moral guide, then how can it make crude statements such as: "...they may eat their own dung and drink their own piss with you" (2 Kings 18:27)? Is that what you want your children reading?" How would you respond to this attack? (Hint: 2 Tim 2:14)

[5m] Does Job 34:4 mean we can choose for ourselves what is right and wrong? _____

[5n] Psalm 25:12 and Proverbs 1:28-30 seem to suggest that fear of God is necessary in order for us to choose wisely and have our prayers answered. What do you think these verses mean?



----- SOME POSSIBLE ANSWERS -----

(Your answers do not have to match exactly.)

Lesson 5 – Evil was a necessary risk so we could have Free Will and experience Love.

(Introductory Question) Why did God allow evil in the first place? This is a very difficult question. Ultimately the answer has to be, "I do not know," because He has not explained it, nor is He required to explain Himself to us. God is not accountable to us. (Rom 9:20) We are accountable to Him. Over the centuries theologians and philosophers have attempted to answer this question. I will share with you the three answers I find the most satisfactory. There are others.

(Lesson 5) **Evil was a necessary risk so we could have Free Will and experience Love.** Love was the goal. God wanted to give us the gift of free will and could not do so without allowing the possibility of us choosing evil. We did choose evil.

(Lesson 6) **Evil is temporary, Good is permanent.** Evil is really only the lack of good which God is in the process of overcoming. Evil is the left over nothing into which the universe is being born. If we had ignored it, like He told us to, we might never have even known what it is.

(Lesson 7) **God often uses Evil against itself.** We can see the reasons for some particular evils, which should give us confidence that God has a good reason for allowing evil to exist in general.

(5A) Deuteronomy 30:19 What were we encouraged to choose? Life

(5B) Numbers 35:11 What were they do for themselves? Select cities of refuge

(5C) Joshua 24:15 What did Joshua choose? To serve the Lord

(5D) Proverbs 3:31 What are we not to choose? The ways of the man of violence

(5E) Isaiah 7:15-16 What is required in order to be able to refuse evil and choose good? Knowledge

(5F) Psalm 119:45 What gave the Psalmist liberty? Seeking God's precepts

(5G) 1 Cor 8:9 What is dangerous about our liberty? It might become a stumbling block for others.

(5H) 2 Corinthians 3:17 Where is there liberty? Where the Spirit of the Lord is

(5I) James 1:25 Obeying what law makes one effectual and lead to blessings? Liberty

(5J) 1 Peter 2:16 What are we not to use as a covering for evil? Our freedom

(5K) Galatians 5:13 Evil is necessary in order for us to have the blessing of a free will, and love. This is the answer I have seen most often used by Christian theologians. God gave Adam and Eve a free will and put them in charge of everything. They used their right of choice to disobey God, which brought evil into the universe. If they did not have the ability to choose evil, they really had no choice. In order to have other free beings with which to share His love, God had to let them have the right and possibility not to return His love. I find this very convincing, but many thoughtful, unbelieving, philosophers find this unconvincing. They re-ask the question another way. Why can't an all powerful God create a person with free will that is good enough to make the right choice? He did not. Perhaps it is logically impossible like making a square circle. A third of the angels decided to rebel against Him. All of us rebel against Him but in His mercy, He has made it possible for us to repent and turn back to Him for rescue and salvation.

My further thoughts:

[5l] My response: "If you do not teach your children how to communicate with you about their bodily functions how are you going to find out if they have medical problems? You are like one of those prudish people who object to medical texts because they have pictures of naked bodies in them. In the proper context dung and piss are not obscene. So, no, I have no problem with them reading the passage. Similar events are described in history books. Does that make them crude or monstrous? Of course not." How could I have better served the truth in a love sandwich?

[5m] It is talking about using an objective standard to discern morality. Read the context.

Lesson 6 – Evil is temporary, Good is permanent

Read these scriptures and answer the associated question:

(6A) Genesis 1:1-3 What was over the surface of the deep? _____

(6B) 1 John 2:7-11 What is passing away? _____

(6C) Hebrews 11:25 How long to the pleasure of sin last? _____

(6D) Colossians 1:13 What did Christ rescue us from? _____

(6E) 2 Peter 2:9 What does God know how to rescue the godly from? _____

(6F) Rom 12:21 Evil is really only the lack of good which God is in the process of overcoming. Evil is the nothing into which the universe is invading. If we had ignored it, like He told us to, we might never have even known what it is. Do you find this explanation satisfactory? Why? (Hint: Rev 21:1-5)

Think & Pray _____

For further thought:

[6g] *Atheist Attack*: "Jesus is insulting: Jesus said, 'whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire' (Mat. 5:22). Yet, he himself did so repeatedly, as Matt 23:17, Luke 11:40 and Luke 12:20 show. Shouldn't he be in danger of hell too?" How would you respond to this attack? (Hint: 1st Tim 6:4)

[6h] *Atheist Attack*: "Isaiah 45:7 'I, the Lord, makes peace and create evil.' Who? What? God creates evil? Did you know that the Holy Bible states here that God creates evil? Shocking! However, if you create evil - like by murdering someone - wouldn't you prove to be Godlike? Yes, I think so." How would you respond to this attack? (Hint: 1st Tim 6:3-5)?

[6i] Do you match the description of any of the people in 1 John 2:12-14? Have you overcome the evil one? How do you know?



For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,
- COLOSSIANS 1:13 NIV

----- SOME POSSIBLE ANSWERS -----
(Your answers do not have to match exactly.)

Lesson 6 – Evil is temporary, Good is permanent

- (6A) Genesis 1:1-3 What was over the surface of the deep? Darkness
(6B) 1 John 2:7-11 What is passing away? The darkness Which means it still exists.
(6C) Hebrews 11:25 How long to the pleasure of sin last? Not long
(6D) Colossians 1:13 What did Christ rescue us from? The domain of darkness
(6E) 2 Peter 2:9 What does God know how to rescue the godly from? Temptation

(6F) Rom 12:21 Evil is really only the lack of good which God is in the process of overcoming. Some would say that there is no such thing as evil. I'm not suggesting that. The Bible certainly spends a lot of time talking about evil (it is mentioned over 500 times) so it seems it must exist. However, it is not the opposite of good. In the same sense that silence is the lack of sound, cold is the lack of heat, and darkness is the lack of light, evil is simply the lack of good. In the beginning, everything was good. (Genesis 1) Evil has no power without good and yet good has power to do things without evil. Consider that horrific evil of flying airplanes into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. It is hard to imagine a more evil act and yet without the power of goodness it would have been impossible for those men to do it. They had to have self-discipline and perseverance to overcome their ignorance and learn how to fly those airplanes. They had to have mutual trust and loyalty to coordinate the attack. They had to have courage to fly an airplane to their certain death.

Please do not misunderstand. There is no suggestion here that what these men did was good. However, without some good traits, they would have been powerless. You can have self-discipline, perseverance, loyalty, mutual trust and courage and never do anything evil at all, only good. But if all they had was hate, lack of discipline, mistrust, fear, etc., they could do nothing. The power to accomplish anything, whether good or bad, comes from good, not evil.

Here is another way to express the same idea. Suppose someone told you that if you stay out in the sun light too long your skin will burn unless you apply sun block lotion. If you believe this, and apply sun block, you avoid a painful burn. If you do not believe it, you will burn because the statement was true. The truth has power whether you believe it or not. Suppose someone else told you that if you stay out in the moon light too long you will burn unless you apply moon block lotion to your skin. They just happen to have some to sell for \$12.95 a bottle. If you believe them, you have wasted \$12.95. If you do not believe them, nothing happens. The lie by itself has no power at all. It is just a weak, dark, wriggling thing lying on the ground, helpless. It has no power until you add your belief to it. Your trust and belief, good things, gives the lie the power it needs to steal your \$12.95 and destroy some of your dignity. Because in this universe good is powerful and evil powerless, it follows that in the end good will triumph and that God is good. That is a comforting thought.

My further thoughts:

[6g] My answer: If you look at the context of Matthew 5 you will discover He is talking about calling people names with contempt and/or with the intent to hurt them. When Jesus called people fools, He was accurately describing them in an attempt to waken them to repentance. (Perhaps I should have explained that if a someone's fate is my responsibility, my purpose is to do them good, and I judge rudeness is necessary to get their attention, rudeness is not wrong. Grabbing someone by their collar and jerking them around is normally rude behavior, but it is not wrong if you are pulling them out of the way of a speeding car.)

[6h] What I said was, "Yes, He created evil. He also warned us to stay away from it. If you do not follow His directions and stay away from it, you are responsible, not Him." That is not a bad answer but I think now I would answer it differently. The "evil" mentioned in the two verses he referenced is not "evil" in the sense of morally corrupt. It is talking about the terrible things that happen as a result of our moral corruption and our sin. It is talking about God's judgment as a consequence of our wrong. It does say "evil" in the KJV but in more modern translations it says "calamity" or "ill" probably so people will not fall into this verbal trap. Now I think I would point out these translation issues and ask him to explain more about what his question means.

Lesson 7 – God often uses Evil against itself

Read these scriptures and answer the associated question:

(7A) Gen 50:20 The brothers meant to _____.

(7B) Gen 50:20 God used it for _____.

(7C) Job 1:6-12 Who allowed Satan to attack Job? _____

(7D) 1 Cor 12:26 If we are a Christian when we suffer, do we suffer alone? _____

(7E) Hebrews 5:8-10 What is Christ the source of? _____

(7F) Romans 8:28 **Evil is a tool God sometimes uses to accomplish good.** We can see the reasons for some particular evils, which should give us confidence that God has a good reason for allowing evil to exist in general. Do you find this explanation satisfactory? Why or why not?

Think & Pray _____

For further thought:

[7g] *Atheist Attack*: "God Is Not Fair: Why are we being punished for Adam's sin? After all, he ate the forbidden fruit, we didn't. It's his problem, not ours, especially in light of Deut. 24:16, which says children shall not be punished for the sins of their fathers." (Hint: Ezekiel 18:14-18)

How would you respond to this attack?

[7h] What are some good things you have in your life that are the result of struggle and difficulties?

[7i] What have you learned in this course that you hope you remember?

The Problem of Evil

If you never felt pain, then how would you know that He is a Healer?

If you never went through bondage, then how would you know that He is a Deliverer?

If you never had a trial, then how would you know He can help you overcome?

If you never felt sadness, then how would you know that He is a Comforter?

If you never made a mistake, then how would you know that He is forgiving?

If you never were in trouble, then how would you know that He will come to your rescue?

If you never were broken, then how would you know that He can make you whole?

If you never had problems, then how would you know that He can solve them?

If you never had any suffering, then how would you know what He went through?

If you never went through the fire, then how would you know that He is always there?

If He simply gave you all things, then how would you appreciate them?

If He never corrected you, then how would you know that He loves you?

If you had all power, then how would you learn to depend on Him?

If your life was perfect, then what would you need Him for?

----- SOME POSSIBLE ANSWERS -----

(Your answers do not have to match exactly.)

Lesson 7 – God often uses Evil against itself

Read what Joseph said to his brothers in Genesis 50:20 and answer these two questions

(7A) Gen 50:20 The brothers meant to do evil or harm.

(7B) Gen 50:20 God used it for good, to save many lives.

The story of Joseph is a perfect example of God using evil for good. (Genesis chapters 37 to 50) His brothers sold him into slavery. Certainly they suffered the pangs of guilt for years as a result. Genesis 42:21 says, "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Joseph must have felt that he was suffering evil when he was in prison in Egypt. This story teaches two important truths regarding the existence of evil. First, God will see to it that good will eventually prevail. Second, we are responsible for the evil we do.

(7C) Job 1:6-12 Who allowed Satan to attack Job? God Without that attack we would be without this wonderful Old Testament book of poetry, and the truth it proclaims.

(7D) 1 Cor 12:26 If we are a Christian when we suffer, do we suffer alone? No

(7E) Hebrews 5:8-10 What is Christ the source of? Eternal Salvation By accepting suffering obediently Jesus was able to save us all. (See also Is 53:3)

(7F) **Evil is a tool God uses to accomplish good.** For what valid reason would a good and powerful God allow the amount and kinds of evil which we see around us? Good question, but remember God is not answerable to us. Perhaps the proper way to measure it is to look at those times when we do have the most complete knowledge of the situation. In my experience this is very rare but when I do have such knowledge, invariably I am thankful for the pain God has given me. It causes me to trust him for those times of personal suffering which I do not understand fully, yet. Read Romans 8:28 Do you think "all things" in this verse includes evil things?

Surely it is difficult for us to understand why God would allow some things to happen. But simply because we find it difficult to imagine what reasons God could have for permitting them, does not mean that no such reasons exist. It is entirely possible that such reasons are not only beyond our present knowledge, but also beyond our present ability to understand. We may be like children who do not understand the necessity of a painful medical procedure or a trapped animal striking out against its rescuers.

My further thoughts:

[7g] My response: Your proclivity to commit sin was inherited from Adam and is a consequence of his poor choices. If you need cleansing from sin it is your own, not his. Perhaps you do not have any sins yet, as Noah did not in Genesis 6. But as it says in Romans 3:23 and is demonstrated in Noah's life in Genesis 9 you will eventually. The particular sins you may or may not have committed or may commit in the future is a matter you will have to sort out for yourself with your conscience and your Maker.

Psalms 13 and 88 - Sample prayers of suffering people.

After seeing all of the above one atheist responded like this: "Neither is good powerful nor is evil powerless beyond the person doing the good or evil act in question. Good and evil do not exist as objective features of the universe but as human, contingent qualifiers for deeds."

My Answer: "I have offered arguments and evidence as the foundation of this question. You address none of this. You simply contradict me and ignore every argument." What could I have said to get him to actually consider my arguments?

Lesson 8 – Bonus Lesson – Atheist Attacks

Here are some more atheist attacks around the Problem of Evil:

[8A] *Atheist Attack*: Exodus 20:5 and Ezekiel 18:20 contradict one another. In one place it says the punishment for sin is passed down from generation to generation and in the other it says that is not true. How would you respond to this attack?

Think & Pray _____

[8B] *Atheist Attack*: "In Luke 11:37-44 Jesus was rude to his dinner host. He called his host a fool. Jesus' behavior was not socially acceptable, so he could not be God. How could he be our example of good behavior?" How would you respond to this attack? (Hints: Gen 29:26, Judges 8:24, Ruth 4:7, John 18:39, Acts 25:16, Lev 20:23)

Think & Pray _____

[8C] *Atheist Attack*: "How could a perfect God create a man so imperfect that he sinned? He could have given us Free Will but left the tree with the bad fruit out of the garden. That would have left us with thousands of 'free' choices, all good." How would you respond to this attack?

Think & Pray _____

[8D] *Atheist Attack*: "Why does God require sacrifice? Why did someone have to die before he forgave us? Couldn't he just decide to forgive us?" How would you respond to this attack? (Hint: Rom 6:23)

Think & Pray _____

[8E] *Atheist Attack*: "Why would a good God send people to Hell?" How would you respond to this attack? (Hint: 2 Peter 3:9)

Think & Pray _____

[8F] *Atheist Attack*: "I would rather believe in a God of love, like most religions, not a God of wrath and judgement, like the Christian God." How would you respond to this attack? (Hint: 1 John 4:7-8, 16))

Think & Pray _____

----- SOME POSSIBLE ANSWERS -----
(Your answers do not have to match exactly.)

Lesson 8 – Bonus Lesson – Atheist Attacks

[8A] My Answer: If I decide to drink up my income and beat my wife and children, they bear the consequences of what I do. God does not, however, hold them accountable.

Atheist Retort: Nor does he intervene to avoid their suffering. So it can be argued that God willed it. Also, moral behavior, including sin, is not inherited.

My Answer: You bring up three unrelated points. First to accuse God of not helping us in our suffering. It is not on topic, and nothing could be further from the truth. God is very concerned by our situation. He sent His Son to die in our place, so that we might be rescued. Yes, our suffering is within God's will. Because He is good we know then, that our suffering is necessary. I have made no claim that moral behavior is inherited. You are arguing with a straw man. You don't have to read Ezekiel 18 to understand Exodus 20:5. Just read Exodus 20:6. (See question 2g in Lesson 2 of this course.)

[8B] My answer: "The attackers say Jesus showed rudeness, crudeness, and insensitivity. Imagine, they say, talking like this to someone in his house after he invited you to dine with him. Even if it were true, common decency dictated a more refined approach. I guess I missed the Dear Abby column the archeologists dug up from 31 AD where we learn the proper etiquette for attending dinner at someone else's house. I wonder what it says about hosts that criticize their guests personal habits as this Pharisee did. Basically, what these accusers are saying is that Jesus cannot be the Savior because they do not approve of His manners. They set themselves up as the judge of mannerly behavior in a culture separated from them by 2000 years. Have you ever watched a movie they made 50 or 60 years ago? They often have customs I do not understand. How much more difficult to understand those of that two thousand years ago.

"But even if the atheists are right about it being rude (and they may be) that does not disqualify Jesus from anything at all. Where does it say that being rude is always sinful? My experience is that it is sometimes exactly what is called for. How else was He to bring this Pharisee to a place of repentance? Would it be better to politely let the man go to Hell?"

Atheist Retort: We could start with Jesus' admonition against calling thy neighbor 'fool', but for this it will be enough to point to the humility that is expected from the epitome of goodness.

My answer: Your first clause is an argument already offered and answered above. (Lesson 6) As for the rest of it, Jesus did not do or say anything contrary to the quality of humility. I think you do not understand the term. In what way did He over estimate his own importance? In what way did He exhibit false pride? What is your evidence of any arrogance on His part? Is dying in your place not humble enough for you? What more do you want?

[8C] My Response: It was necessary for us to have free will. He did not want robots. The tree just allowed us to make the choice to either freely love Him or not. That is the free choice He was most interested in, so why would He leave it out?

[8D] My Response: I don't know. God doesn't explain it except to say that death is the consequence of sin. That He can transfer the death to someone else in our place is a miracle I do not fully understand, but for which I am eternally grateful.

[8E] My Response: He doesn't send people to Hell. They choose to go there. (To understand more about this issue course #15 about Heaven & Hell in the Serving the Truth in a Love Sandwich series.)

[8F] My Response: The only religion where you find a God of love is those worshipping the God of the Bible.