EVIL & SUFFERING!

"How could a loving, all-powerful God stand by while there is so much misery down here?

If there is a God – and I seriously doubt it – he is either incapable of preventing the horrible pain and suffering in the world, or he just doesn't care.

As far as I can tell, he just doesn't exist."

How Can We Begin To Understand, Let Alone Respond?

Types of Evil and Suffering

Man-Made:

- **"Moral" Evil – People hurting people**
- **~~"Christian" Evil – "Christians" hurting people~~**

Natural:

- **"Natural" Evil – Natural disasters**
- **"Bodily" Evil – Birth defects, disease, …**

God-Made:

- **~~"Theistic" Evil – God hurting people~~**

We could study any one of these for weeks.

Three Ways to Look at Evil

❑ The **Logical** "Problem"

❑ The **Probabilistic** "Problem"

❑ The **Emotional** Problem

DANGER!

- How we respond can do more harm than good, because human suffering is terribly real.

- Reasonableness and logic do not matter to the person is going through a time of pain and loss.

This may be the worst situation of all in which to try to "win" an argument.

DANGER
EXPLOSIVES

The Logical "Problem"

- An "OOO" God Would Not Allow a World of Evil and Suffering

  - Omniscient – All knowing

  - Omnipotent – All powerful

  - Omnibenevolent – All loving

- Evil and Suffering Do Exist

► Therefore, God Does Not Exist

Reasonable Responses

† **"Total Safety"** response

† "**Big Picture"** response

† **"How Much"** response

† **"Meaning of Good"** response

† **"Ultimate"** response

† **"God's Plan"** response*

* Often NOT an advisable response

"Total Safety" Response
The Problem of Evil

† On the surface, that sounds like a logical argument. Let me see if I'm sure I understand what you're saying. A loving and powerful God should take away all suffering? ... or at least the really "bad" stuff?

† So, ... if you're saying He should have given us a safe and stress-free world, help me imagine what that world would be like.
- Abundant food and clean water everywhere in the world?
- No crime – no people, ever, with negative or aggressive feelings?
- No disease, no genetic conditions, no birth defects?
- No such thing as risk or danger – no way to fall off a cliff or building?
- Perfect climate – no storms, lightning, earthquakes, floods, droughts?
- No death??? – Or, at least no death with suffering?

    ... Is that what a loving and powerful God should have done?

† Interesting, ... So, just wondering, what would we do all day? No one would have to work. No one would want to be rich or powerful. Hmmmm

"Big Picture" Response
The Problem of Evil

† OK. Let's say we've concluded there is no God because of all the human suffering. It seems to me that we now have an even bigger problem. We still have a world full of suffering and evil, don't we. And we can't blame God because there isn't one. Right?

† But here's an even bigger question we have to deal with. What is it about crime, cruelty, disease, war and natural disasters that makes them evil? Without a God, who gets to decide **What is evil?** Better yet, **what is "good"?** WHY???

† To really get some perspective on all this, maybe we should step back and ask some even bigger questions. Like … **Why are we here** and is our mortal **death simply the end** of our existence – our body, mind, heart and soul (whatever that is)? As the old song asked, "Is that all there is?" Have you thought much about those basic questions of our existence and purpose?

The "How Much" Response
The Problem of Evil

† That's a great question. Do Christians have a simple and 100% fool proof answer? No! For starters, though, let's say that God asks you how much evil you think He should prevent.

- Killer storms? Big earthquakes? Tsunamis? Famines? Epidemics? Wars? Genocide? Rape? Murder? …

† How about:

- Heavy rains, lightning, ice storms, falling trees, colds and flu, muggings, mind altering drugs, bad bacteria, distracted drivers, angry people, … ?

† So, then, How much evil should God stop? What are the implications? Where does that ultimately lead us?

† So, wouldn't a world without evil would have to be a world without freedom of choice? How's that for a big question?

† Do your children have the free will to love you? To do "good" things? To do bad things? Could they really love you if they were not free not to???

The "Meaning of Good" Response
The Problem of Evil

† So, for me at least, big questions like that lead to even bigger questions about our very existence. It's hard to talk about evil without asking: what is the basis for the concept of "good"?

† If billions of years of purposeless collisions of matter and energy have produced everything, including us, then how can anything be called good? Isn't it just a question of survival and reproduction?

† If the secular-humanist evolution model is true, let me ask you this. What is really "bad" or "wrong" with:

  ▪ Torturing animals, just for the fun of it?

  ▪ Killing 6 million Jews – or any genocide? Isn't that just survival of the fittest?

  ▪ Killing "inferior" babies and unproductive old people?

† Do we really know what is "evil" or "bad"? Why? What is "morality" and doesn't it need to come from some kind of objective unchanging standard? What standard should we choose?

The Rejection of God Response?
The Problem of Evil

† You know what? I really appreciate this opportunity to exchange ideas with you.   It's obvious that you're very intelligent and that you care deeply about our world; and you seem to be sincerely seeking the real truth of our existence and the meaning of life – if there is one.

† So here's an interesting question for you to consider: How big would our world's problems of suffering be if every human would obey the ten commandments and follow the teachings of Jesus? Instead, we live in a world where God and Christians are rejected and ridiculed. How's that working for us?

† Please … let me ask you just one more question, because this issue is so important …

† To eliminate all the evil in the world, is it OK if God starts with you?   … and me?