

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH EVIL IN THE WORLD?

When you examine the wonders of creation, it's hard not to believe in a Creator. Many of the most brilliant scientists through the ages have reached the conclusion that there must be a divine source for the universe. There is order in the life cycle of every creature. There is design in the placement of our solar system. There is even logic in the structure of the molecules and atoms that make it all up. It all points to a master plan.

But then along comes disorder and chaos. And suddenly, all our theories of providence and logic and order go right out the window. An earthquake wipes out an unsuspecting village. A random act of violence kills an innocent bystander. A child dies from a fatal disease. Even a bad day at the office can cause us to wonder if God is watching, if he cares, or if he even exists at all. Can so much evil in the world really be a part of his plan?

There are no easy answers to the problem of evil in the world, but we can find a few clues in the book of Genesis. When God created humans, he gave us authority over the earth and free will to make our own choices. This freedom included the choice to sin – to question God's wisdom and do things our own way. And even though this always brings harmful consequences, God gave us that option. Is it possible that God could have made humans without the ability to sin? Perhaps, but then to remove the chance of sin is to remove choice altogether. We would have been mere robots, taking orders from God and never thinking, feeling, or choosing for ourselves. And could God really have a relationship with machines that are programmed to serve him with no other alternative? That's why God created humans like he did. He gave us all the creative desire, free will, and moral responsibility that he himself had. And most significantly, we have a genuine ability to experience a relationship with our Creator.

In spite of God's desires for us and the world, the first humans chose to sin. Nothing has changed today. With every act of selfishness, we continue to abuse the freedom God gave us. Put simply, we choose sin. And along with sin come the consequences of our sinfulness; broken lives with broken relationships in a broken world.

Of course, we all admit to causing some of our own troubles. It's no surprise that most of our wounds are self-inflicted. And yet, every now and then, we're forced to ask: what about everything else? Though much of the evil we see and experience in the world may not be a direct result of our own actions, it is a consequence of humankind's sinfulness. God is not the source of meaningless evil. But oftentimes he permits us to encounter the effects of a world rendered imperfect by sin. Perhaps it is to alert us to our need for him, or possibly to remind us that we're not home yet. We may never understand all of God's ways or the stories of our lives that are being written each day. And yet we can trust in his love and goodness knowing that in every story of brokenness lays the potential for redemption.