

WHY WOULD A GOOD GOD ALLOW SUCH EVIL & SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

JOHN 11:1-44

A brief survey of current headlines will reveal an undeniable reality of suffering and evil in our world. Alongside this grim reality there are philosophers, thinkers, and skeptics trying to address some of the questions that arise from such a broken world. Is there a God? Does this God care? Is this God good? Is this God powerful enough? How do we define good?

Although these academic interactions can be insightful, the more intimate struggle of personal suffering and experience of evil is what drives people to deeply question the goodness of God. The ethereal evil of the world out there takes on flesh and blood in our own experience with real scars and tangible consequences. It is in the midst of personal pain that we wrestle to understand how this could possibly be redeemed.

The account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead gives us significant insight into the nature of suffering and how Christianity uniquely addresses the pain we experience in this world. It is not only the miraculous healing of a dead man that gives us hope in the midst of pain, but how Christ approaches suffering, how he engages suffering, and how he answers suffering that is life altering.

MEMORY VERSE

Genesis 50:20

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

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|--------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | MONDAY | Genesis 3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | TUESDAY | Genesis 37 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | WEDNESDAY | Genesis 41 & 50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | THURSDAY | Psalms 119:65-72 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | FRIDAY | Isaiah 45:5-13 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | SATURDAY | Romans 8:18-25 |

POST SUNDAY STUDY CONTENT

Understanding the Text

1. How does Jesus frame the illness of Lazarus? (vs. 4)
2. What is Jesus' disposition towards Lazarus' family? (vs. 5) What did that drive him to do? (vs. 6).
3. In verse 23 Jesus declares that Lazarus will rise again, but Martha seems to misunderstand. How does she interpret Christ's words? (vs. 24)
4. How do verses 33-35 clarify how Jesus responds to Mary and Martha's suffering?
5. Verse 42 gives a purpose statement for his prayer, but also brings back the stated purpose in verse 4. What is the purpose of this interaction with death and suffering?

Applying the Text

1. What kinds of questions do you think Mary and Martha were asking as they waited for Jesus to respond?
2. Jesus directly links the suffering that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus experience with a means for bringing glory to God (vs. 4). Given that we often think of suffering as a result of our own guilt or sin, how does this reframe our understanding of suffering?
3. Christ knows the end of the story of Lazarus before it even began. Yet when he meets Mary and Martha he weeps with them. How does this frame God's disposition towards our suffering and pain?
4. Jesus could have healed Lazarus from far away or hurried to heal him before he died, yet he lingered and allowed the pain and sorrow of death to be felt. Why did Jesus do this? (vs. 25-27) How does this help frame our suffering?
5. Isaiah 45:7 indicates that God is sovereign over all things. For Joseph in Genesis 50:20, this is a comfort. For us it can be a stumbling block. What presuppositions do we hold that make this a challenging idea?