



HOUSE to HOUSE
HEART to HEART

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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 5



WHY DOES GOD ALLOW

Suffering?

Allen Webster

In view of recent events, one writer suggested that we all “boycott God.”

She proposed that if we all stopped praying, attending church, and praising Him, that this just might make Him stop killing so many people in tragic disasters.

God gets blamed for a lot of things He doesn't do. Satan made the fire that destroyed Job's sheep look like it came from heaven (Job 1:16). The persecution came from the opposite direction, but it was in the devil's favor to make God appear as the bad guy. It is still in Satan's favor to do so, and he still does.

Unbelievers stumble over the problem of evil, and Christians sometimes doubt God when suffering. They all wonder:

- How could a good God allow evil?
- Why doesn't an almighty God do something about it?
- Couldn't an omniscient God create a world without evil?
- Why doesn't a loving God help His children?

A moment's reflection shows the impossibility of God's intervening in every disaster or each time evil is about to befall His world or one of His children.

Why doesn't God do something?

PEOPLE WOULD LIVE IN CHAOS

God is a God of order. He goes by the rule He gave for the church: “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Our existence depends on the consistent working of physical laws such as inertia and gravity that God set up at the Creation (Genesis 1).

If God suspended natural laws every time one of His creatures was in a dangerous or life-threatening situation, chaos would reign. Cause and effect would have no meaning. Changing one person's life would set off a domino effect for all those in the same area and all who were connected through relationship.

We could not function in a world without rational prediction.¹ We would not know how to behave from one second to the next. In some instances one event would follow from a certain set of conditions, but at another time the same circumstances would lead to a different result.

What if parachutes usually plummeted toward earth, but occasionally floated back up into planes' engines? What if a football thrown to a receiver in the Super Bowl came down *most* of the time? Would you want to be running a chain saw, lighting a fire, swimming, or driving down the interstate at seventy miles per hour when natural laws became temporarily suspended?

PEOPLE WOULD BECOME RECKLESS

God desires His children to be prudent and careful (Proverbs 16:21; Acts 16:28). If good people were invincible and bulletproof, they would take crazy chances. If there were no danger in running a stop sign at a busy intersection, texting while driving, smoking, using firearms, or lifting weights, then people would soon abuse every situation.

What if a Christian playing football on Friday night could not be injured? What of a soldier on a battlefield who was invincible? Norman Geisler postulates, "The necessary intervention would finally grow in proportions that would effectively remove human freedom and responsibility."²

PEOPLE WOULD FAIL TO DEVELOP SPIRITUALLY

A woman walking in the woods came upon an emperor moth beating its wings and struggling to force its way out of the narrow neck of its cocoon. Feeling sorry for it, she took a sharp stick and split the cocoon, enabling the moth to be free.

The moth then crawled aimlessly for a few hours and died. Its beautiful hues never developed, and its lovely wings never formed. The furious struggle with the cocoon is nature's way of developing the wings and building the strength needed to fly. Without struggle, the moth cannot live.

Without challenge and sadness, we would become shallow, selfish, and spoiled. Hardships teach patience, endurance, resilience, courage, and self-sacrifice.

God's goal is our spiritual growth. He wants us to mature to be like Christ—pure, righteous, wise, and loving (2 Corinthians 3:18; James 1:2–4; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). Our suffering helps us to comfort others by knowing what similar pain feels like (2 Corinthians 1:3–4). Therefore, hardships are necessary.

PEOPLE WOULD COMPLAIN THAT THEIR FREE WILL WAS TAKEN AWAY

People think they want God to intervene, but perhaps it is not that simple. The trade-off would be more than bargained for.

People do not want God to intercept every evil act or thought. Imagine if every time an unbeliever tried to post a rant against God on her blog, her computer caught fire. Or each time someone preached false doctrine, he developed laryngitis. Or he got a headache every time he had a lustful thought. Or if someone tried to hit another in anger, his arm became paralyzed. Nobody could get drunk, high, make a fast (dishonest) buck, or cheat on her husband.

God gave us volition (Joshua 24:15)—allowing us to choose our own path (Proverbs 14:12). He desires that we serve Him out of love (John 14:15; Revelation 22:17), but He will not force us to do so (Luke 13:34; Revelation 3:20). With volition, consequences naturally follow.

PEOPLE WOULD FOLLOW CHRIST FOR THE WRONG REASONS

If God protected His followers from all harm, then people would follow Christ for physical rather than spiritual reasons.

If no Christian ever got cancer, had a heart attack, suffered from a disease or was injured in an accident, would churches have any problem baptizing people? Every patient in every hospital, rehab center, and nursing home would line up at the door waiting a turn.

Jesus strongly desires that all follow Him (Matthew 11:28; 1 Timothy 2:4), but He wants followers to understand the need for the healing of the eternal soul, not just the earthly body (1 Peter 2:24).

Back to "boycotting God." C. S. Lewis observed, "A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word 'darkness' on the walls of his cell."³

David wrote, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psalm 2:2–4).

Instead of boycotting God, let's serve Him. Instead of blaspheming, let's bless His name. Truly, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). We can trust God.

Endnotes:

¹ Bruce Reichenbach, "Natural Evils and Natural Laws," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 16, 187.

² Norman Geisler, *The Roots of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 75.

³ *The Problem of Pain*. Centenary Press, London (1940).

"As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are My ways higher than your ways,
and My thoughts than your thoughts."

ISAIAH 55:9



The Parable of the Teacup

A couple used to go to England to shop in its beautiful stores. They both liked antiques and pottery and especially teacups. On their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, in a beautiful shop they saw a beautiful teacup. They said, "May we see that? We've never seen one quite so beautiful."

As the lady handed it to them, suddenly the teacup spoke. "You don't understand," it said. "I haven't always been a teacup. There was a time when I was red and I was clay. My master took me and rolled me and patted me over and over and I yelled out, 'Let me alone,' but he only smiled and said, 'Not yet.'

"Then I was placed on a spinning wheel," the teacup said, "and suddenly I was spun around and around and around. 'Stop it! I'm getting dizzy!' I screamed. But the master only nodded and said, 'Not yet.' Then he put me in the oven. I never felt such heat. I wondered why he wanted to burn me, and I yelled and knocked at the door. I could see him through the opening and I could read his lips as He shook his head, 'Not yet.' Finally the door opened; he put me on the shelf, and I began to cool. 'There, that's better,' I said. And he brushed and painted me all over. The fumes were horrible. I thought I would gag.

"Stop it, stop it!" I cried. He only said, 'Not yet.' Then suddenly he put me into another oven, not like the first one. This was twice as hot and I knew I would suffocate. I begged. I pleaded. I screamed. I cried. All the time I could

see him through the opening nodding his head, saying, 'Not yet.' Then I knew there wasn't any hope. I would never make it. I was ready to give up. But the door opened and he took me out and placed me on the shelf. One hour later he handed me a mirror and said, 'Look at yourself.' And I did. I said, 'That's not me; that couldn't be me. It's beautiful. I'm beautiful!'

"I want you to remember, then," he said, "I know it hurts to be rolled and patted, but if I had left you alone, you'd have dried up. I know it made you dizzy to spin around on the wheel, but if I had stopped, you would have crumbled. I know it hurt and was hot and disagreeable in the oven, but if I hadn't put you there, you would have cracked. I know the fumes were bad when I brushed and painted you all over, but if I hadn't done that, you never would have hardened; you would not have had any color in your life. And if I hadn't put you in that second oven, you wouldn't survive for very long because the hardness would not have held. Now you are a finished product. You are what I had in mind when I first began with you."

MORAL: God knows what He is doing (for all of us). He is the Potter, and we are His clay. He will mold us and make us, so that we may be made into a flawless piece of work to fulfill His good, pleasing, and perfect will (Hebrews 12:3-9).

—*Food for the Soul*, 2006

Funeral Wishes

Three buddies were discussing death. One asked the others, "What would you like people to say about you at your funeral?" He said, "I would like them to say, 'He was a great humanitarian who cared about his community.'" The second said, "I want them to say, 'He was a great husband and father who was an example for many to follow.'" The third guy said, "I want them to say, 'Look, he's moving!'" One day we will "move" as we will experience the general resurrection of the dead (John 5:28-29). —*Author Unknown*

"The dead in Christ shall rise"

1 THESSALONIANS 4:16

"Grace makes salvation possible; obedient faith makes salvation actual."

—Batsell Barrett Baxter, *The Family of God*, page 39



God's Plan for Saving Man

God's Grace, Ephesians 2:8

Christ's Blood, Romans 5:9

The Holy Spirit's Gospel, Romans 1:16

Sinner's Faith, Acts 16:31

Sinner's Repentance, Luke 13:3

Sinner's Confession, Romans 10:10

Sinner's Baptism, 1 Peter 3:21

Christian's Work, James 2:24

Christian's Hope, Romans 8:24

Christian's Endurance, Revelation 2:10

Against Violence

When I applied for Conscientious Objector draft status, a friend suggested that I ask a variety of individuals to write and explain their personal knowledge of my sincerity as a non-violent person. After getting letters from several friends, I decided also to ask my nine-year-old brother to write one. His letter, which was never submitted to the draft board, reads as follows:

Dear Sir,

I think I know Billy pretty good since he is my big brother and we have known each other all my life and now I'm 9 years old. He never shot a gun or hurt anything. He is against violence. He doesn't even fight. I don't know why he wants me to write this, but he said he would break me in half if I didn't. So I did.

Russ

—Bill Sylvester (La Mesa, California)



For more material on the home and family, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, grandparents, and family finances, go to www.housetohouse.com.



A Teenager's Prayer

“Dear Father in heaven, I am young and don’t understand what it is like to be a parent, but it must be hard. I pray you will help Mom and Dad to be good parents, strong in the ways you want them to be. I want to look up to them with admiration and feel confident that their instruction is right.

“Help me, dear Lord, to understand my parents. Remind me that when I don’t get my way, it is because they love me and not because they want to be mean or deprive me of a good time.

“When I become stubborn and refuse to listen, help me, God, to accept the fact that they have wisdom and experience since they were once teenagers themselves; whereas I have never been a parent.

“Put in my heart the respect and consideration they deserve for their years

of hard work and sacrifice. They raised me as best they could. Let me not repay them with grief or shame. Rather, help me to give them obedience, respect, forgiveness, and love.

“Most of all, God, while I still have my parents here on earth, help me to appreciate them and let them know I do.”

—*The Salina Journal*, 1983

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

EPHESIANS 6:1–4

Lifetime Memories

Pause with your child when others hurry by; walk with your child when others are running.

Smile with your child when others can find only frowns; listen to your child when others appear preoccupied.

Talk with your child when others prefer shouting; praise your child when others can find only fault.

Hug your child when others fail to sense the power of touch; read with your child when others prefer television.

Learn from your child when others have forsaken curiosity; play with your child when others prefer being entertained.

Discipline your child when others fail to establish limits; apologize to your child when others pretend perfection.

Pray with your child when others have lost faith; dream with your child when others have become too cynical.

—Anthony Witham



This Much I Know

A “Know So” Religion from First John

Some say, “We can’t know anything.” Others seem to think they know everything. The truth is somewhere in the middle, for we can know the truth (John 8:32; 1 John 2:21), but we will not understand many things until we get to heaven (1 John 3:1–2).

Consider fifteen “knows” in 1 John. We can know the following:

1. “We know Him” (1 John 2:3–4).
2. “We are in Him” (1 John 2:5).
3. Who is born of God (1 John 2:29).
4. We will be like Him (1 John 3:1–3).
5. “He was manifested to take away our sins” (1 John 3:5).
6. We have “passed from death to life” (1 John 3:14).
7. “We are of the truth” (1 John 3:19).
8. “He abides in us” (1 John 3:24).
9. The Spirit of God abides (1 John 4:2, 3, 6).
10. “Everyone that loves knows God” (1 John 4:7–8).
11. “We abide in him” (1 John 4:13).
12. “We love the children of God” (1 John 5:2–3).
13. We have eternal life (1 John 5:11–13).
14. He hears us (1 John 5:14–15).
15. The whole world lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19). —Dan Winkler

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”

JOHN 8:32

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Bible Quiz

VOLUME 22:5

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "Major and Minor Prophets" as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).



Name: _____
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Questions taken from the King James Version

Answers to Last Issue

Birds, Bees, and Bugs: 1. Fifth (Genesis 1:21–23); 2. Raven (Genesis 8:7); 3. Dove (Genesis 8:8); 4. Quail (Numbers 11:31); 5. Ahab (1 Kings 21:24); 6. Doves (John 2:14–16); 7. Gnat (Matthew 23:24); 8. 2 (Luke 2:22–24); 9. Ostrich (Job 39:13–15); 10. Amorites (Deuteronomy 1:44); 11. Holes, nests (Matthew 8:20); 12. Sparrows (Matthew 10:29); 13. Tongue (James 3:7–8); 14. Ravens (1 Kings 17:1–4); 15. Rizpah, Saul's concubine (2 Samuel 21:10–11); 16. Bees (Judges 14:8–18); 17. Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:33); 18. Eagles (Isaiah 40:30–31); 19. Eagle (Ezekiel 1:10); 20. Dove (Matthew 3:16).

Great Bible Events

Directions: Find your answers in Genesis 1:20–23; 2:21; 41:30; 47:11; Exodus 7:17; 1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Kings 2:8, 11; 4:31; 6:6, 18; 1 Chronicles 9:1; 11:3; 12:19; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Colossians 1:16; 1 Timothy 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

1. What person is responsible for bringing all things visible and invisible into being? _____
2. Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with _____.
3. God put Adam to sleep to take what body part to make Eve? _____
4. What did God create on the fifth day? _____
5. What was the first plague sent upon the Egyptians? _____
6. How many years of famine did Joseph predict will strike Egypt? _____
7. To where in Egypt did Joseph relocate his father and brothers? _____
8. Because of sin, Judah was taken into exile where? _____
9. How did the Israelites declare David their new king? _____
10. What foreign army did David once join? _____
11. In 1 Samuel 4, what object did the Israelites bring to aid them against the Philistines? _____
12. Which article of clothing did Elijah use to part the waters of the Jordan? _____
13. What object appeared to take Elijah up into heaven? _____
14. In a failed healing attempt, what did Gehazi use to heal an old woman's son? _____
15. What did Elisha throw into the Jordan to make an axe head float? _____
16. In 2 Kings 6, with what did God smite the Syrian host? _____
17. When Christ returns, those who are saved will meet Him where? _____
18. After this life, where must we all make an appearance? _____

MAJOR & MINOR PROPHETS

853-840 BC OBADIAH 2, 21 (KEY VERSES)	850-780 BC JONAH 1:9; 3:2	835-796 BC JOEL 2:11, 28	760-750 BC AMOS 5:14; 8:11	753-715 BC HOSEA 4:6; 11:7-8	740-690 BC MICAH 6:8	740-680 BC ISAIAH 9:6; 40:31; 53:4	630-612 BC NAHUM 1:2, 7	627-586 BC JEREMIAH 29:11; 31:31-33; 33:3	625 BC ZEPHANIAH 2:3	606-604 BC HABAKKUK 2:4, 20	605-536 BC DANIEL 2:44; 9:24	593-571 BC EZEKIEL 18:4; 36:24-26	586-516 BC LAMENTATIONS 3:22-24	520 BC HAGGAI 1:7-8	515 BC ZECHARIAH 1:3	430 BC MALACHI 4:2
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All dates are approximate

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Recommended Resource



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The Weeping Preacher

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THE GLORIOUS PERSON OF CHRIST

This glorious person is the soul of the Bible, the center of the whole spiritual system, the attraction for all nations, the ruler, not only among the saints on earth, but also the armies of heaven. God gave Him honor and glory, the apostle says, when He proclaimed Him His Son in the holy mountain.

He walks at the head of the army of God, the true Israel, and among the inhabitants of the earth, proclaiming with all authority both in heaven and on earth: “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father

but by me,” “I am the resurrection and the Life”—“I am he who was dead and am alive, and behold I live forever and ever”—“I have the keys of hell and of death; I can open, and no man can shut; I can shut, and no man can open”—“I am the bright and the morning star, the root and the offspring of David”—“I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me.” “If any man would be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me.”

Such are a few of the many expressions setting forth the exalted position of the Christians’ King and the Christians’ Lord. When He was crowned in heaven,

crowned Lord of all, the Almighty Father swore that He should reign till all His enemies should be put under His feet—that to Him every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess. Lift up your hearts, all you saints, and behold your King! He is the head of the church. Set your affections on Him, follow Him, and consecrate yourselves to Him forever more.

—Ben Franklin (19th century gospel preacher)

“in all things he might have the preeminence”

COLOSSIANS 1:18



A Human Jesus

The Gospel Accounts present a truly human Jesus, not a ghostly figure who only appeared to be flesh and blood.

Jesus spoke of His own body (Mark 14:8), head (Luke 7:44–46), hands, feet, flesh, and bones (Luke 24:39), and blood (Matthew 26:28).

He also displayed distinctly human feelings and qualities: He was moved to pity (Mark 1:41) and compassion (Mark 8:2). He was distressed (Mark 7:34; Luke 8:24–25), angry (Mark 3:5), annoyed (Mark 10:14), surprised (Mark 6:6), dis-

appointed (Mark 8:17; 9:19), and hungry (Mark 11:12).

Although He was born of a virgin, Jesus was a true human being.

Yet after seeing Jesus calm a savage storm by simply “rebuk[ing] the winds and the waves,” His disciples “were amazed and asked, ‘Who can this be?’” (Matthew 8:27).

—Mike Benson, Oxford, Alabama

“Whom say ye that I am?”

MATTHEW 16:15

5 Suggestions for a Better Life

1

When you hear a kind word spoken about a friend, pass it along (Proverbs 3:27; Galatians 6:10). If it's a negative word, keep it to yourself.

2

As a man, spoil your spouse, not your children (2 Samuel 12:3, 8; Proverbs 5:18–19; Ephesians 5:25; 1 Peter 3:7).

3

It is not our job to get people to like us. It is our job to like people (John 13:35; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17).

4

To help your children turn out well, spend twice as much time with them and half as much money on them (Genesis 44:30; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 5:16; 6:4; Colossians 4:5) (H. Jackson Browne).

5

Focus on others, not on self (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:3–5). Someone wrote, “How to Be Miserable.” It reads, “Think about yourself. Talk about yourself. Use ‘I’ as often as possible. Mirror yourself continually in the opinion of others.

Listen greedily to what people say about you. Expect to be appreciated. Be suspicious. Be jealous and envious. Be sensitive to slights. Never forgive a criticism. Trust nobody but yourself. Insist on consideration and respect.

Demand agreement with your own views on everything. Sulk if people are not grateful to you for favors shown them. Never forget a service you have rendered. Shirk your duties if you can. Do as little as possible for others.” —*Daily Walk*, June 29, 1993



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