

Ignite: Why Evil, Pain and Suffering 1

Objective: By the end of the lesson the student will understand three reasons the bible provides for evil, pain and suffering.

Bible Verses:

Amos 1:3-5	Deuteronomy 28
Genesis 4:8	I Corinthians 6:19
Genesis 3:1-3	Genesis 50:19-20
John 3:16	

Essential Question? Why does a loving, merciful God allow evil, pain and suffering?

Opening:

Theodicy is the problem of how God can be “just” and “righteous” given the fact there is so much suffering in the world that He has created and ultimately controls.

Teacher Note: Make sure all scriptures are read out loud in the class by student volunteers.

Content:

One reason, among many, that the Bible provides for pain and suffering is that God is righteous, holy and the ultimate judge of mankind. Therefore, when mankind sins God has the authority to punish us for our sins. One example for this is found in Amos 1:3-5. Here we read about God’s judgment on Israel’s neighbors for their sins.

Israel was also warned by God that He would punish them if they did not observe the things He ordered them to observe. In Deuteronomy 28:1-14, God makes Israel aware of all the blessings He will bring upon them for obedience. But in Deuteronomy 28:15-68 they are told of the cursing’s that could befall them for failure to obey God.

A second reason there is evil, pain and suffering in the world has to do with man’s inhumanity to mankind. From the beginning of our history (Genesis 4:8) we have been sinning against each other. There are numerous example is the bible, but history makes this very clear too.

From 1975-1979 about 1.5 to 2 million Cambodians were killed under the leadership of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia and their leader Pol Pot. These people died from overwork, disease, starvation and execution. This is just one example of many examples of deluded leaders bringing about pain and suffering on people they led and others.

Man does not just sin against other men and women, but also against him/herself. I Corinthians 6:19 tells us our bodies are the temple of God's Holy Spirit. We need to be cognizant of this. Since that is the case why do we abuse our bodies by smoking or overdrinking or overeating? These are other examples of the pain and suffering in the world being due to the choices men and women make.

God has given humanity free will to make his/her own decisions in life (Genesis 3:1-3). God is not going to force humanity to make the right decisions because if He did that we would be nothing more than robots. God is trying to develop character in us so we can one day become part of His family. In order for that to happen we have to choose obedience.

Another reason God allows pain, evil and suffering is because some of it can lead to a greater good being worked out. Notice the interesting story of Joseph. Joseph was hated by his brothers and was sold into slavery. The people he was sold to eventually sold him into Egyptian slavery. In Egypt, he was falsely accused and put in jail. Eventually he gets out of jail and become a top official in Egypt. Finally, his position allows him to save his family from starvation.

Notice how this is addressed in Genesis 50:19-20. The scriptures say that God intended these negative things in Joseph's life to turn out for the good eventually.

Another great example of this is the life of Jesus Christ. Christ (John 3:16) died for us which provides all humanity the opportunity to receive the gift of eternal life. The bad event (Christ's sacrifice) brings about the opportunity for all to have eternal life (good).

Independent Practice:

Keeping in mind the concept that pain and suffering can lead to a greater good---ask the students to think about incidents from their own life or the life of someone they know where something that seemed negative or bad later turned out to be positive or good. Have the students share with a partner then share a few with the whole class.

Close/Reflect

Today we have looked at three biblical reasons for why there is evil, pain and suffering in the world. In our next lesson we will address more reasons the bible provides for why there is evil, pain and suffering.

Any final comments or questions?

Sources: God's Problem, by Bart D. Ehrman, (New York: Harper Collins), 2008.

