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How Could a Good God Allow Evil and Suffering? Discussion Guide

Section 1

Discuss what you applied in the past seven days from the last Overflow Show.

Read Acts 5:1-4.

Share your feelings as to why God did not prevent this sin from occurring?

Section 2

Go to www.OverflowShow.com and listen to the 5 minute podcast titled Evil and Suffering.

Section 3

What did you think? What stood out to you as you listened?

When has the idea of a good God and the existence of evil, pain, and suffering troubled you? What causes you to be uncomfortable about talking to others, especially non-Christian friends, about this issue?

What are some reasons why we believe we need to have a complete answer for this question? What is a good response to lower the person's expectations about the need to have this question answered?

How does the concept of freedom, or what Stroebel calls "freewill," play into this matter? How could you answer someone if they respond with, "Then why didn't God just create the world without freewill, so that there would be no evil and suffering?"

If God is the cause of freewill, does that mean he is the cause of evil and suffering?

Discuss this possibility. We know there is a dreadfully huge amount of evil that goes on in thousands of places around the earth, daily! So God should have mercy on these oppressed people and at least REDUCE the amount of evil. What do you think? What did Strobel write in Case for Faith?

Another discussion question: There are times when someone will get away with evil and live what we see as “the good life” at the same time. Why would God allow this?

Evil deeds are one thing, but what about God allowing birth defects and disease? Why didn't he create a world without that?

Stroebel says that it can be intellectually arrogant to say, “A good God would not allow suffering.” Why does he say that? What are a few analogies that help think through that?

What is God's most direct answer to this world of suffering?

Section 4

Discuss some ways we could apply a few of these principles in the next 7 days?

One suggestion (if needed): Let's do some group polling to see what people's opinions are. Informally mention to non-Christian friends you might be walking with that you are polling friends, perhaps like this: “For my Wednesday night discussion group on religion, we are asking our friends' opinions on the question ‘How could a good God allow so much evil, pain, and suffering in the world. Also, who is the cause of evil and suffering?’ Do you have any opinions on those questions?” Then just take their answers and thank them. Sometimes they will ask what your opinion is. Just see if a discussion ensues. Or tell them next week what the results of your group's polling was...30% say God is cruel or God doesn't exist, 30% say it's man's fault, etc.

The Overflow Show enthusiastically recommends the book THE CASE FOR FAITH, by Lee Strobel, available from Zondervan Publishers.