

# Does Moral Evil Prove There is No God?



## How Could a Loving God Allow Moral Evil?

God calls us to love one another. But have you noticed the fact that people seldom turn to 'love' before they turn to 'hate'? Have you noticed that there are people in the world who seem to love evil as much as some of us love kindness? The existence of moral evil is perhaps the single largest obstacle for skeptics and non-believers. If there is a loving God in our world, then why is it so messed up? Why is there so much evil in the world? Why would God allow people to act this way?

It's important for us to struggle together to try to understand the nature of moral evil and disprove the lie that its existence proves that there is no God. And as we go through this process, I hope that we will find a way to face the challenge of evil in our own lives, as we grasp what God is doing in our world:

### James Russell Lowell:

*Mishaps are like knives that either serve us or cut us, as we grasp them by the blade or the handle.*



## Evil As A Proof

It shouldn't surprise us that non-believers look at the existence of evil as a proof that there is no God. If you read history at all, you will recognize that it is filled with war and incredible brutality, and our own nation has engaged in war within its boundaries as well; a brutal, nasty war where many lost their lives and their faith. You also can't help but turn on the news and see a world that is full of poverty and cruelty. And most of the images we look at seem to involve innocent people who have come to this position as no result of anything that they have done. Many were simply born into their condition. And now in this new world in which we live, we face a new kind of suffering and fear, as terrorism plagues our land and threatens to destroy us. In light of all of this, many are left asking themselves:

*"Where is God?"*

Many would claim that the condition of our world simply proves that he does not exist. But this position is built on one of two lies, that God is either NOT all-powerful, or that God is NOT all-loving. Which of these two positions do you hear the most from your friends? Many would simply say that God is not all powerful:

### Gene Roddenberry

*"We must question the story logic of having an all-knowing all-powerful God, who creates faulty humans, and then blames them for his own mistakes."*

### Epicurus

*"Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent."*

*Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing?  
Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?"*

And some would say that God is not all-loving:

**Mark Twain**

*"If there is a God, he is a malign thug"*

**Edgar Allen Poe**

*"The pioneers and missionaries of religion have been the real cause of more trouble and war than all other classes of mankind."*



**Suffering at the Hands of Christians**

Part of the problem in trying to convince the world that moral evil does not disprove the existence of God lies in the fact that non-believers often look at Christians as the SOURCE of evil in their world. Christianity seems to have a history of conquest and brutality of its own. This history is from the design and plan of God, and completely contrary to His desire for our lives, but it is a real history none-the-less.

The problem lies in inability many non-believers to understand the nature of suffering and evil, the nature of love and the relationship between the two. This relationship requires a little bit of thought, and many of us simply choose to take the easy road, embracing the false notion that:

*God cannot exist if there is evil and suffering in our world*

But when you examine the source of moral evil, you will see that its presence actually proves the existence of a loving God.



**1 John 4:7-8**

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

According to the Bible, God is love. But if this is true, how can God stand by and watch His creation be filled with so much anger and hatred? The answer is clear once we begin to understand the nature of love. Love cannot exist without a cost; it is not free. Love comes with a price. Those of us who have loved know this to be true; whether Christian or atheist. Love often involves pain. Why is that so? And why can't an all-powerful God simply STOP people from doing things that are morally evil?



**Is God All-Powerful?**

We often say that God is 'all-powerful', but we seldom understand what this means. How many of us recognize, for example, the fact that even an all-powerful God is not able to do everything or anything we might suppose?

As a matter of fact, if you stop and think about it, there are some things that God simply CANNOT do.

### **1** God Cannot Sin

*Holiness is part of his intrinsic nature, He cannot 'do' or 'be' otherwise. For this reason, we also know that God cannot lie. This places no limitation upon an Almighty God. It is simply the necessity of his character. If God has said anything, promised anything, or threatened anything, you can bank on it. God cannot sin, He cannot lie. Why? Because it would be contrary to His NATURE!*

### **2** God Cannot Change

*His Being is immutable. His purposes are unalterable. The objects of his love and the measure of his love for them are always the same. He is the same today as he was from the beginning of time. He will not cease to exist. Why? Because it would be contrary to His NATURE!*

### **3** God Cannot Learn Anything New

*Before He created anything He knew all about it. There is no progression in knowledge for God as there is with man. God has no limitations on anything that He can create. There is nothing that God does not know. This too is simply a part of his NATURE.*

You see, it is quite possible to be all-powerful and still exist within the parameters of your nature. Doesn't that make sense? If your nature is truth and love, then everything that you are is simply a reflection of that nature. It's for this reason that God also cannot contradict truth.

### **4** God Cannot Contradict Truth

*This also places no limitation upon an Almighty God. It is simply the necessity of his character. Does this mean he is not all powerful? No - it means that as a perfect and unchangeable being, His commands and actions are rooted in the ultimate truth which flows from his nature. God can only do things that are possible within the nature of His being. He can't make square circles or a two sided triangle. It is asking God to bring about a logically contradictory state. Thomas Aquinas said it best:*

*"Whatever involves a contradiction is not within the scope of God's Power, because it cannot qualify for possibility. Better, however, to say that it cannot be done, rather than God cannot do it..."*

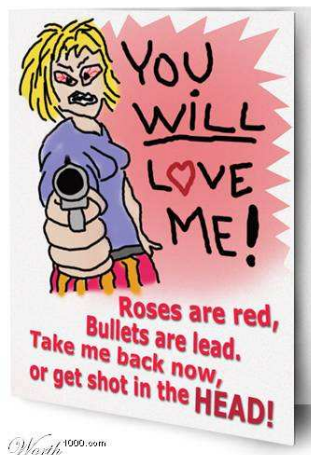
OK, are you starting to understand God's Nature? God IS all powerful, but he will not contradict Himself. God IS all loving and that is a permanent part of His Nature. And God WILL NOT DO ANYTHING OUTSIDE OF HIS NATURE!!! So, if God so loves us, why would he create a world in which moral evil is even possible? In order to answer this question, we've got to see the relationship between the creator and His creation... If you were to look at all the things that I've created over the years when I was an architect,

you would see that even over large periods of time, in projects that had very different requirements, all of my designs were strikingly similar. Even when the shapes were different, they all reflected my nature, my passions, my interests, my being. My creation always reflected the nature of who I am as a human being. God is no different.



### The Real Reason Moral Evil Exists

A God of love can only design what is true to his nature. We know that God cannot create outside of this nature because he would then be contradicting himself. And we also know that God is love (this is the Christian claim, at least). We would expect then that God would be able to create a perfect world in which love is possible for us as humans. Guess what; He has done that. But here's the problem. In order to have a world in which love is possible, you must have CHOICE. You simply cannot love if you cannot choose. There is NO SUCH THING AS FORCED LOVE. But think about it for a minute, if we are given the choice to love, we will also have to have the choice to hate. One choice cannot come without the other. And, of course, this ability to choose has changed our world entirely. We often choose sin, because it feels good, it serves our selfishness, or it makes life easier for the time being.



### *Love Cannot Be Forced*

We have to remember that God creates as a result of his nature. God creates a world that has the ability to LOVE. God allows us the ability to LOVE by granting us free will. But many times we use this free will to choose sin. An old Spanish proverb says that "where there is love, there is pain". Why? Because the ability to choose love carries with it the danger of choosing hate. One cannot be separated from the other. The reality is that moral evil is the result of our own free will. Suffering is the necessary consequence of the incredible gift of free will. Without free will, there can be no love, and a world without love cannot come from a loving God.

Let's ask ourselves a simple question: "Which God would we describe as truly 'good'; a God who allows for the existence of God, or a God that does not allow for the existence of love?" Clearly, you and I would say that a good God creates a world in which love

exists. The problem here is not God cannot stop moral evil, but that God allows us to choose love. Our choice for evil is all our own.



### Suffering to Blessing

And as Christians, we do understand what it is to follow a loving God who is not unfamiliar with the impact of moral evil on our world. We worship a God who has suffered at the hands of those who inflict the morally evil and brutal act we know as The Cross. And we realize that God is the master of turning apparent disaster into eternal glory. As a matter of fact, the road to glory winds right through the worst of suffering. If you've lived very long, you know that is true, even in your own life. The finest marriages have been crafted and refined through painful times. The greatest achievements have weathered the strongest setbacks. Glory is hidden in the suffering.

It may sound crazy, but God's love for us, is demonstrated through pain. We may think that we understand what love looks and sounds like, but God's ways are mysterious. His love is demonstrated in tragedy... God has given us something incredible through the most horrific, terrible, and excruciating moment of suffering the world has ever known. Imagine the Perspective of Jesus as he approached the cross, knowing full well the depth of suffering he would have to endure.

These were certainly desperate times, filled with danger and betrayal. Evil loomed at every turn. Hope was hard to find. And as Jesus was betrayed and flogged and beaten, there appeared to be no other way to see the event except as a defeat. How can victory be at hand? Where is God? Jesus was surrounded by evil and suffering. The entire world seemed to be his enemy, screaming for his destruction. His followers were devastated, suffering as they watched in terror. And as he hung there on the cross, what joy could they find? In this moment of suffering and misery, where is God? How could he allow it to happen? Does not this kind of suffering prove that there is no God?



### Evil Does Not Triumph

Imagine Mary's reaction to all of this. The single worse day of her life. Her son is dead, her hopes are crushed. In that very moment, I think she would have told you that there is NO GOD. I think her despair from a world with this kind of suffering would have been too much for her to bear. If the story ended right here, it would be the tragedy to end all tragedies.

But we know that only THROUGH this tragedy we have the ability to come to a new life in the resurrected Jesus. A promise of salvation. A promise of a new body. A promise of life everlasting. A promise of the existence of God. Suffering does not disprove God's existence. Suffering is part of His existence. How is Jesus able to endure suffering without losing Hope? Scripture tells us:



### Hebrews 12:2-3

*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the*

*right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Look at this same verse in “the Message” paraphrase version:



*Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed — that exhilarating finish in and with God — he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!*

God has given us a model to follow in times of suffering: a way to resist the false notion that moral evil proves there is no God. We know that moral evil is the result of God's good gift of 'choice', and we know that God has given us His Son as an example of how to overcome the moral evil we all experience in our world.