

Growth Track Two

201: Biblical Foundations for Life

Session 2: If God is Good, Why Does Evil Exist?

Overview: At the end of this session, students will be able to answer the question, “If God is so good, why does evil exist?” They will have a better understanding of the tension between freedom of choice and the realities of living in a world cursed by sin.

Three Basic Truths:

1. God is good.

*Psalm 100:5 NIV For the Lord is good and His love endures forever;
His faithfulness continues through all generations.*

2. God is all-powerful.

*Jeremiah 32:18 NCV Great and powerful God, your name is the Lord
All-Powerful.*

3. The world is filled with evil.

*John 3:19 TLB Their sentence is based on this fact: That the Light from
heaven came into the world, but they loved the darkness more
than the Light, for their deeds were evil.*

Three Understandings are Required to Reconcile These Three Truths:

1. God's Will: God Allows Evil.

- a. There is no love without choice.

Psalm 81:12 NIV *So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.*

- b. There are always consequences of choice.

Leviticus 5:17 NIV *If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD'S commands, even though he does not know it, he is guilty and will be held responsible.*

- c. God does use suffering as punishment for evil.

Isaiah 13:11 NIV *I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.*

- d. That does not mean God enjoys suffering.

- a. God has compassion for all suffering.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NCV *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is the Father who is full of mercy and all comfort. He comforts us every time we have trouble, so when others have trouble, we can comfort them with the same comfort God gives us.*

- b. God provides care for us in our suffering.

Hebrews 4:16 NCV *Let us, then, feel very sure that we can come before God's throne where there is grace. There we can receive mercy and grace to help us when we need it.*

- c. God uses suffering to develop our character.

James 1:2-4 NIV *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

- d. God works all things into a pattern for good.

Romans 8:28 NLT *And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.*

- e. God will end all suffering one day.

Revelation 21:3-4 NIV *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

Satan's Influence: Satan Afflicts Evil.

1. Satan does not have the power to create, but he can pervert what God created.

2. Satan's Biography:

a. Satan was an angel.

Revelation 12:7-9 NIV *And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*

b. Satan was cast out from heaven because of his pride.

Isaiah 14:12-15 NIV *How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.*

- c. Satan has been given limited freedom to influence the Earth.

Job 1:6 -12 NCV One day the angels came to show themselves before the LORD, and Satan was with them. The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "I have been wandering around the earth, going back and forth in it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? No one else on Earth is like him. He is an honest and innocent man, honoring God and staying away from evil." But Satan answered the LORD, "Job honors God for a good reason. You have put a wall around him, his family, and everything he owns. You have blessed the things he has done. His flocks and herds are so large they almost cover the land. But reach out Your hand and destroy everything he has, and he will curse You to Your face." The LORD said to Satan, "All right, then. Everything Job has is in your power, but you must not touch Job himself." Then Satan left the LORD'S presence.

- d. Satan is already eternally condemned.

Revelation 20:10 NIV And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Man's Choice: We Accept Evil.

1. Evil was introduced to the world by human actions.

- a. Adam and Eve were given a choice.

Genesis 2:17 NIV But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.

b. Adam and Eve chose sin.

Genesis 3:6 NCV *The woman saw that the tree was beautiful, that its fruit was good to eat, and that it would make her wise. So, she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some fruit to her husband, and he ate it.*

c. Adam and Eve's choice carried consequences.

- Death for themselves.

Genesis 3:23 NIV *So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.*

- An inheritance of death for their children.

Romans 5:12 NCV *Sin came into the world because of what one man did, and with sin came death. This is why everyone must die.*

d. Evil is perpetuated in the world by my actions.

- It was not just Adam and Evil's fault.

Romans 7:15-20 NIV *I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.*

e. God has already defeated evil for us.

Colossians 2:13-15 NIV When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Romans 7:24-25 NIV What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I, myself, in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Objectives:

Learn It: God never wastes a hurt.

Live It: My choices have consequences. I will choose good over evil.

Love It: I will look for God's loving hand in every circumstance of my life.

Discussion:

1. In what ways has this session challenged your ideas about God's goodness and evil in the world?
2. Share a circumstance in which you have seen the principle of "choices lead to consequences" played out. (You might share either a choice that led to a good circumstance or a choice that led to a painful one.)
3. How have you seen God work in the circumstances of your life?