

Answering Objections Yet Moving Them A Step Closer



By Dr David Geisler
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Removing Barriers

We are destroying speculation and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God.
II Corinthians 10:5



Moving Them A Step Closer

"I have discovered that the more effective a Christian is in identifying common barriers and removing false understandings, the more effective they can be in helping others take one step closer to Jesus Christ each day." (1 Cor. 3:6)

Dr. Dave Geisler

Singaporean lady:

Is it true that we are all going to be judged after this life is over?

1. **What are the questions and or issues behind each question or issue that needs to be addressed?**

Possible Answers:

Is God really fair for sending us to Hell?
Should God be punishing me even when I do my very best?

Singaporean lady:

Is it true that we are all going to be judged after this life is over?

2. **What are the terms that will need to be clarified?**

Possible Answers:

Be judged

Singaporean lady:

Is it true that we are all going to be judged after this life is over?

3. **What is the truth we want them to grasp concerning the question or issue raised?**

Possible Answers:

God is ultimately just in his dealing with mankind

Singaporean lady:

Is it true that we are all going to be judged after this life is over?

4. ***What are some questions and or illustrations/stories we can use to help them grasp this truth?***

Singaporean lady:

Is it true that we are all going to be judged after this life is over?

- * ***How can I answer their question in a way to help them take steps towards Christ?***

Possible Answers:

Yes it is true that none of us measure up to either God's standards or even our own standards of right and wrong....But the good news is that God has provided an answer to our dilemma by sending Jesus..."

Conversational Evangelism in Action

- I. Common barriers or obstacles in your conversations with others.
 - Obstacles in their *understanding* of Christianity.
 - Obstacles in their *embracing* of Christianity

A. Obstacles in their understanding of Christianity

1. Thinking there is no difference between religious beliefs (Pluralism)
2. Not understanding the nature of Sin
3. Not understanding the meaning of salvation by grace- many people rather believe in salvation by works.
4. Reconciling the problem of evil with the existence of God

B. Obstacles in their embracing of Christianity

1. Their sinful and selfish nature (Jer. 17:9)
2. Their sense of obligation to their dead ancestors
3. Their pluralistic mindset
4. Their indifference towards religious perspectives
5. Their focus on materialism
6. Their negative attitude towards Christianity because Christians thinking they have the only way to God (the issue of Tolerance)
7. Hypocrisy among Christians
8. The need to pay a tithe
9. Their tendency to view Christianity as a Western religion

II. Identifying these obstacles

- * **Four key questions to help identify these obstacles and moving them a step closer**

1. What are the questions and or issues behind each question or issue that needs to be addressed?

2. What are the terms that will need to be clarified?

- * Four key questions (continue)
- 3. ***What is the truth we want them to grasp concerning the question or issue raised?***
- 4. ***What are some questions and or illustrations/stories we can use to help them grasp this truth?***

1. ***What are the questions and or issues behind each question or issue that needs to be addressed?***

- * Over a period of time you will identify what are the key questions behind the specific question or issue you are dealing with.

2. ***What are the terms that will need to be clarified?***

- * What is **one key term** we may need to clarify that may cause misconceptions in their own thinking?
- * What are the **attitudes** or **perspectives** that we need to deal with?

3. ***What is the truth we want them to grasp concerning the question or issue raised?***

- * Ask what some **concepts** or **theological principles** are they unaware of or confused about.

* ***Ask what concepts or theological principles are they unaware of or confused about.***

Identify the general category:

1. Pluralism cannot be true
2. The consequences of Sin
3. Not understanding that the Buddhist way of thinking of doing good to earn our way to heaven is inadequate.

4. ***What are some questions and or illustrations/stories we can use to help them grasp this truth?***

- * ***Consider what kind of question and or story or illustration they could identify with that will help them to understand the point you want them to grasp.***
- * ***Once they understand the point you are trying to communicate then draw an inference to the theological principle that you are attempting to establish in their mind reinforced by the use of specific concepts or questions to achieve common ground.***

Example 1

Hindu students “Why aren’t my good works good enough to get into heaven?”

1. *What are the questions and or issues behind each question or issue that needs to be addressed?*

Possible Answers:

Is God really just or fair?

Example 1

Hindu students “Why aren’t my good works good enough to get into heaven?”

2. *What are the terms that will need to be clarified?*

Possible Answers:

Good enough

Example 1

Hindu students “Why aren’t my good works good enough to get into heaven?”

3. *What is the truth we want them to grasp concerning the question or issue raised?*

Possible Answers:

Theological Truth:

We tend to overestimate our own righteousness and underestimate God’s holiness.

Example 1

Hindu students “Why aren’t my good works good enough to get into heaven?”

4. *What are some questions and or illustrations/stories we can use to help them grasp this truth?*

Example 1

Hindu students “Why aren’t my good works good enough to get into heaven?”

Possible Questions:

“Can God arbitrarily decide to forgive us of our sins and therefore ignore His standard of Justice?”

Possible Illustrations or stories:

Common Barrier

(1 of 3)
Water analogy

Suppose you were drinking some water out of a paper cup. Would it be acceptable for me to put a little sewage* in your water?

If not do you see how something can seem so small but in reality still have a huge impact?

So is it possible our “sins” could cause a bigger barrier between us and God than we think?

* Concept adapted from Glenn McGorty (*Mirror Model*)

Common Barrier

(2 of 3)
Wedding Dress Analogy

Picture a young women getting out of the car in her beautiful white wedding dress.* Then imagine another car pulling up right next to her and a man with grease all over him getting out. As he gets out and passes by her, he smears grease all over her beautiful white wedding dress.

Now, do you think that wedding dress is going to acceptable to her?

Of course not, because the dress has to be spotless!

* Concept adapted from Glenn McGorty (*Mirror Model*)

Common Barrier

(3 of 3)
Wedding Dress Analogy

“Now if you and I have a standard of what is right and wrong and we don’t live up to it, can you imagine that God’s standard might be a little higher than our own?” (Matt. 5:48; Js. 2:10)

(Notice that we don’t declare what God’s standard is. We are trying to get them to realize the possibility of God’s standards, thus building common ground with them.)

Removing the Barriers

Practice Exercise

1. What is so special about Christianity? I thought that all religions basically teach the same thing.
2. How can you claim there is only one way to God? Aren’t you being a bit arrogant and exclusive?
3. How can I choose Christ when my dead ancestors are separated from Him and could be separated from me?
4. What about those in other countries who have never had the opportunity to hear the gospel?
5. The Christian way of salvation is not the Buddhist way of thinking. One must earn his way to heaven.
6. How can there be a loving God when there is so much evil and suffering in the world?

Common Barrier #1

(1 of 12)

“What is so special about Christianity? I thought that all religions basically teach the same thing.”

Common Barrier #1

(2 of 12)

“What is so special about Christianity? I thought that all religions basically teach the same thing?”

1. ***What are the questions and or issues behind each question or issue that needs to be addressed?***

Possible Answers:

Common Barrier #1

(3 of 12)

1. ***What are the questions and or issues behind each question or issue that needs to be addressed?***

Possible Answers:

The issue of pluralism

The belief that Christianity is nothing special

Common Barrier #1
(4 of 12)

“What is so special about Christianity? I thought that all religions basically teach the same thing?”

2. *What are the terms that will need to be clarified?*

Possible Answers:

Common Barrier #1
(5 of 12)

“What is so special about Christianity? I thought that all religions basically teach the same thing?”

3. *What is the truth we want them to grasp concerning the question or issue raised?*

Possible Answers:

Not all religions make the same claims and have the same weight of evidence to verify those claims.

Common Barrier #1
(6 of 12)

“What is so special about Christianity? I thought that all religions basically teach the same thing?”

4. *What are some questions and or illustrations/stories we can use to help them grasp this truth?*

Common Barrier #1
(7 of 12)

“What is so special about Christianity? I thought that all religions basically teach the same thing?”

Possible Questions:

No Comparison!
(8 of 12)

“Are you aware that comparing Christianity to the world’s religions is not like comparing apples with apples?”

Christianity

World Religions

Removing the Barriers
(9 of 12)

Christ’s claims and proof of claims are totally unique compared to any other major religious leaders.

“Buddha claimed to point to the way, Muhammad claimed to be a prophet of God, but Jesus Christ is the only major religious leader that ever claimed to be God, who fulfilled prophecy, lived a sinless life, and then died on the cross and rose from the dead.”

Dave Geisler



I
Common Barrier #1

(10 of 12)

“What is so special about Christianity? I thought that all religions basically teach the same thing?”

Possible Questions

If you were coming to the end of your life, and you met Jesus and other great religious leaders, and each suggested a different path, who’s advice should you take.

Wouldn’t you take the advice of someone who’s been to the other side and come back to tell us about it?

Common Barrier #1

(11 of 12)

“What is so special about Christianity? I thought that all religions basically teach the same thing?”

Possible Questions:

If you were not sure if you should follow Jesus or other great religious leaders, consider this perspective.

If you follow Jesus and you are wrong, you may have many other life times to get it right.

Yet if you follow other paths and you are wrong, you do not have any more chances to get it right. (Heb. 9:27)

Wouldn’t it be wise then to choose Christ first?

I
Common Barrier #1

(12 of 12)

“What is so special about Christianity? I thought that all religions basically teach the same thing?”

Possible illustrations or stories:

Common Barrier #2

(1 of 15)

“How can you claim that there is only one way to God?”

“Aren’t you being a bit arrogant and exclusive?”

I
Common Barrier #2

(2 of 15)

“How can you claim that there is only one way to God? “Aren’t you being a bit arrogant and exclusive?”

1. **What are the questions and or issues behind each question or issue that needs to be addressed?**

Possible Answers:

Common Barrier #2

(3 of 15)

What might be the belief behind the question?

They may believe that Christians are arrogant to think that they have the truth and are therefore better than others.

They may believe that Christians are not very “open” to other faiths.

Common Barrier #2
(4 of 15)

What would you say to them?

Answer: (First build a bridge by finding Common Ground)

"I would agree with you that we certainly shouldn't be arrogant about our beliefs or think that we are some how better than others for holding different beliefs.

"I look at Christianity as one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread."

Common Barrier #2
(5 of 15)

"How can you claim that there is only one way to God? "Aren't you being a bit arrogant and exclusive?"

2. *What are the terms that will need to be clarified?*

Possible Answers:

Common Barrier #2
(6 of 15)

Possible Answers:

Arrogant, exclusive, Open

Ask the question "What do you mean by Open?"

"What does the person mean by 'You must be open to everything'? What it almost always means is, 'You must be open to everything that I am open to and disagree with anything I disagree with.'"

Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods*, p. 9

Common Barrier #2
(7 of 15)

"How can you claim that there is only one way to God? "Aren't you being a bit arrogant and exclusive?"

3. *What is the truth we want them to grasp concerning the question or issue raised?*

Possible Answers:

Some things can only be one way

Exclusiveness not necessarily a bad thing

Common Barrier #2
(8 of 15)

"How can you claim that there is only one way to God? "Aren't you being a bit arrogant and exclusive?"

4. *What are some questions and or illustrations/stories we can use to help them grasp this truth?*

Common Barrier #2
(9 of 15)

"How can you claim that there is only one way to God? "Aren't you being a bit arrogant and exclusive?"

Possible Questions:

Common Barrier #2

(10 of 15)

“How can you claim there is only one way to God?”

Help them grasp the principle?

“How many ways does it take to restore a broken dating relationship for something we said or did?”*

•Concept adapted from Dean Halverson,
A Compact Guide to World Religions, p. 62

Common Barrier #2

(11 of 15)

“Don’t we have to say in some way we are sorry for the things we said or did that hurt the other person?”

“Now if that is the way it is in our relationship with other people, why would that be any different in our relationship with God?”



Common Barrier #2

(12 of 15)

“How can you claim that there is only one way to God? “Aren’t you being a bit arrogant and exclusive?”

Possible illustrations or stories:

Common Barrier #2

(13 of 15)

Christianity is too exclusive!

Your Answer:

“What about when we get married? “Don’t we exclude every other person of the opposite sex from our life but one?”

“Isn’t this a good thing for us to do?”

“So the real issue is what are you including and why, and what are you excluding and why!”



Common Barrier #2

(15 of 15)

Christianity are intolerant!

Along with the charge that Christians are arrogant and exclusive is also the charge that Christians are intolerant.

What would say to them?

“Ask “Now certainly you would not say that you just tolerate your favorite dessert, right? Because tolerance can only properly be observed when you dislike or disagree with someone who holds different views than your own.

Tolerance only can be observed if there is some kind of disagreement. True tolerance involves putting up with something you dislike or disagree with?”

Common Barrier #3

(1 of 11)

How can I choose Christ when my dead ancestors are separated from Him and could be separated from me?

1. What are the questions and or issues behind each question or issue that needs to be addressed?

Possible Answers:

|
Common Barrier #3
(2 of 11)

How can I choose Christ when my dead ancestors are separated from Him and could be separated from me?

2. *What are the terms that will need to be clarified?*

Possible Answers:

|
Common Barrier #3
(3 of 11)

How can I choose Christ when my dead ancestors are separated from Him and could be separated from me?

3. *What is the truth we want them to grasp concerning the question or issue raised?*

Possible Answers:

|
Common Barrier #3
(4 of 11)

How can I choose Christ when my dead ancestors are separated from Him and could be separated from me?

4. *What are some questions and or illustrations/stories we can use to help them grasp this truth?*

|
Common Barrier #3
(5 of 11)

How can I choose Christ when my dead ancestors are separated from Him and could be separated from me?

Possible Questions:

|
Common Barrier #3
(6 of 11)

How can I choose Christ when my dead ancestors are separated from Him and could be separated from me?

Possible illustrations or stories:

|
Common Barrier #3
(7 of 11)

How can I choose Christ when my dead ancestors are separated from Him and could be separated from me?

Your Answer:

Are you absolutely sure they are separated from Christ?

Your Answer:

If they know what you know about who Jesus is what do you think they would advice you to do?

Common Barrier
(8 of 11)

How can I choose Christ when my dead ancestors are separated from Him and could be separated from me?

Your Answer:

Did you know that scripture actually speaks to this issue?

"And he (the rich man) said, 'Then I beg you, Father (Abraham), that you send him (Lazarus) to my father's house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'"

Luke 16:27-28 N.A.S.B.

Common Barrier
(9 of 11)

Do you realize that your decision for Christ now could have an impact on future generations of family members?

Do you realize that you could be the key to other current family members coming to Christ before it is too late? (Heb. 9:27)

Common Barrier #3
(10 of 11)

This may also lead to the question of "How we can be happy in Heaven when we have a loved in Hell."

Your Answer:

There are some things about the bible we really do not understand but that we must have simple faith to believe that it is true.

I don't know how we can be happy in heaven when I know a loved one is in hell, but I know that the Bible teaches that God will wipe away all our tears (Rev. 21:4).

Common Barrier #3
(11 of 11)

But How Can I Know That This is True!

Your Answer:

"I can trust Him for things I don't understand because of the things He has revealed to me that I do understand."

Common Barrier #4
(1 of 13)

"What about those who have never heard the Gospel?"

- 1. What are the questions and or issues behind each question or issue that needs to be addressed?**

Possible Answers:

Common Barrier #4
(2 of 13)

Possible Answers:

"How is it fair for God to condemn someone for not having enough knowledge to save them, but just enough knowledge to condemn them?"

|
Common Barrier #4
(3 of 13)

“What about those who have never heard the Gospel?”

2. What are the terms that will need to be clarified?

Possible Answers:

|
Common Barrier #4
(4 of 13)

“What about those who have never heard the Gospel?”

3. What is the truth we want them to grasp concerning the question or issue raised?

Possible Answers:

|
Common Barrier #4
(5 of 13)

“What about those who have never heard the Gospel?”

4. What are some questions and or illustrations/stories we can use to help them grasp this truth?

|
Common Barrier #4
(6 of 13)

“What about those who have never heard the Gospel?”

Possible Questions:

|
Common Barrier #4
(7 of 13)

“What about those who have never heard the Gospel?”

Possible Illustrations or stories:

|
Common Barrier #4
(8 of 13)

Answer:

Romans 1:18-20 says that men have knowledge about God, but they turn away from Him. As a result, they have enough knowledge to condemn them even though they do not have enough knowledge about God to save them.

But why is this fair?

Common Barrier #4

(9 of 13)

Remove Their Barriers

Answer:

God is not responsible for giving us greater light of who He is when we have not responded to the light we already have been given.

Matt. 13:12 – “For whoever has, to him shall more be given more.”

Examples:

Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40, Cornelius in Acts 10, the God-fearing Greeks in Acts 17

Common Barrier #4

(10 of 13)

Lost In the Desert!*

Let's say that you're lost in a desert and that it is getting dark. Furthermore, you're hungry and thirsty and know deep down inside that if you don't find food and shelter soon you are probably going to die.

Then you see a speck of light on the horizon indicating that there is human life out there. But instead of moving toward the light, you move away from it, whose fault is it if you die?*

It would be your fault, right?

* This illustration was taken from Dr. Norman Geisler

Common Barrier #4

(11 of 13)

Why Is It Your Fault?

Because, you saw a light that indicated that there was someone who might be able to help you, but instead you chose to go away from the light.

Furthermore, if you had chosen to move toward the light, wouldn't the light have grown brighter, revealing who was there?

In a similar way, God is not responsible for giving us greater light of who He is if we haven't responded to the light He has already revealed through general revelation!

Common Barrier #4

(12 of 13)

As a further illustration of God's blamelessness regarding our choices, we know that the Bible reveals that there will be people of every dialect from every nation in Heaven (Revelation 5:9).

Further more, don't you think that if God loves us and demonstrated that by paid the ultimate price in sending Jesus to die in our place, He would be willing to do what ever it took to save us?

Common Barrier #4

(13 of 13)

“The important question that you need to answer is:

“Now that you know, what are you going to do with this information since you do know about Christ?”

Common Barrier #5

(1 of 7)

The Christian way of salvation is not the Buddhist way of thinking.

One must earn his way to heaven.

How would you respond?



Common Barrier #5
(2 of 7)

The Christian way of salvation is not the Buddhist way of thinking.

One must earn his way to heaven.

1. *What are the questions and or issues behind each question or issue that needs to be addressed?*

Possible Answers:

Common Barrier #5
(3 of 7)

The Christian way of salvation is not the Buddhist way of thinking.

2. *What are the terms that will need to be clarified?*

Possible Answers:

Common Barrier #5
(4 of 7)

The Christian way of salvation is not the Buddhist way of thinking.

3. *What is the truth we want them to grasp concerning the question or issue raised?*

Possible Answers:

Common Barrier #5
(5 of 7)

The Christian way of salvation is not the Buddhist way of thinking.

4. *What are some questions and or illustrations/stories we can use to help them grasp this truth?*

Common Barrier #5
(6 of 7)

The Christian way of salvation is not the Buddhist way of thinking.

Possible Questions:

Common Barrier #5
(7 of 7)


The Christian way of salvation is not the Buddhist way of thinking.

Possible Illustrations or stories:

Common Barrier in Objection #6

“How can there be a loving God when there is so much evil and suffering in the world?”

Common Barrier in Objection #6

Why the Question Causes Difficulties For Us 

The implication of their question is that God doesn't exist. Otherwise, He wouldn't have allowed so much pain and suffering to exist in the world.

Yet if He did exist, He wouldn't really be an all good God. Either way, it would remove the idea that the God that the Christians believes in and worships can actually exist.

Common Barrier in Objection #6

Understand that the objection is not really valid as to whether God's exists or not but what kind of God He really is.

Common Barrier in Objection #6

“How can there be a loving God when there is so much evil and suffering in the world?”

Help them to see that only the Theist can adequately answer the question about evil and suffering.

Illuminate the discrepancies

Evil: Who can answer?

The Agnostic?
Why ask? - Cannot know

The Atheist (Naturalist)?
Who are you asking? - No one to ask

The Pantheist (New Ager)?
What question? - Evil is not real

The Theist?
If God exists, then the question is valid and the theist can offer some valid answers!

Evil: Who can answer?

“Muslims believe that suffering is due to God. Anything that happens is the will of Allah. If you are suffering, that is God's will for you.

Hindus, by contrast, will tell you that your suffering is not so much God's fault as yours.”

Nick Pollard, Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult, p. 132

Defining Evil and Suffering

“How can there be a loving God if there is so much evil and suffering in the world?”

What would you say to them?

What do you mean by evil?

Is it possible to know what is evil without some standard of good?

Straight Line = Standard

C.S. Lewis' Argument Against God

“[As an atheist] my argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?”

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p 45.



“If there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. Dark would be without meaning.” C.S. Lewis

Mere Christianity, p 46.

How Do We Measure Evil?

Don't we measure what is evil by the standard of good rather than measure good by a standard of evil?

So, if we say something is good or right, doesn't that imply a moral law?

And if there is a moral law, doesn't that imply there is a moral law giver?

An Independent Standard for Measurement

“The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard, saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other. But the standard that measures two things is something different from either.”

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p 25.

Clarify Terms!

“How can there be a loving God if there is so much evil and suffering in the world?”

Now clarify some more terms!

Is the question asking why would a good God cause bad things to happen to good people or why would a good God allow bad things to happen to good people?

The Bible teaches that God can not be tempted!

"When tempted, no one should say, God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.... Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

James 1:13,17 (NIV)

Who then is the Author of Evil?

Criticism raised:

- God is the author of everything
- Evil is something
(The Pantheist escapes this by saying that somehow evil is not really real)

Therefore: God must be the cause of evil

It is Not a Thing...

But evil is not a thing (it is a lack in things. St. Augustine said it was a privation)

Example:

Rust-car
Moth-eaten shirt
Dirt-hole

- Evil is like the hole you create when you remove the good dirt.

To Miss the Mark

To sin is to miss the mark, to fall short from the standard, to not measure up, to be less than what we should be (Rom. 3:23)

Therefore, it does not follow that God causes evil (Js. 1:13-17)

Answer to the Cause of Evil:

"God made everything perfect."

"One of the perfect things that God made was free creatures."

"Free will is the cause of evil (Gen. 3:6)."

"Therefore, imperfection (evil) can arise from the perfect (not directly, but indirectly, through freedom)."

Note:

1. "God created the fact of freedom; man performs the acts of freedom."
2. "God made evil possible; creatures make it actual."

Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, p. 219.

Restate the question...

Restate the question using the word allow rather than cause:

Why would a good God allow bad things to happen to good people?

Why doesn't God step in and stop it
(Evil and Suffering)?

He can but He won't. Why? -Because His direct intervention to stop evil will also require that He suspends our freedom

Where do you want God to draw the line?

If God were to wipe out all evil from this day forward, what would be the results?

Who would be left?

WHATEVER STEP HE TAKES
WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH
OUR REBELLION WITHOUT
VIOLATING OUR FREEDOM

God woos us *without*
violating our freedom

"How do I make someone love me
without violating their free will?"

**But What is God doing about the
problems of Evil and Suffering?**

He identifies with our sin and sufferings in
the Person of Jesus Christ

**Uncover The Assumptions Made
Behind The Question!**

Some may assume that the goal in this life is merely to be happy rather than the knowledge of God that will lead to happiness in the next life.

The fact is there are many evils that occur in this life which might be considered pointless with respect to producing human happiness. Yet they may not be pointless with respect to producing the knowledge of God.

Remember That God Has a Purpose for Evil and Suffering!

Even if we don't know God's purpose, He may still have a good purpose for evil.

We do know some good purposes for evil (Rom. 8:28).

Six known purposes for God allowing Evil and Suffering

It is necessary for Character Development:

"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." James 1:2-4

Character Development (cont.)

"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." 1 Peter 5:10

- Biblical example
- Job (Job 42:3-6)
- Joseph (Gen. 50:20)
- You & I

To teach us moral consequences

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." Gal 6:7 (NIV)

To warn us of Impending Danger

And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? 3 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 4 "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? 5 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. "Lk 13:2 – 5

Example: Hot stove

Pain actually keep us from self-destruction

Example: leprosy

To Warn US...

"God whispers in our pleasures, speaks [to us] in our conscience, but shouts [to us] in our pain. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

C.S. Lewis, *The Problems of Pain*, p. 93

To Bring About The Greater Good. (Rom 8:28)

Examples:

Joseph

“And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” Gen. 50:20 (NASB)

Christ (Mark 10:45)

Us! (Rev 21:4)

To Bring About The Final Separation Of Good And Evil (Matt. 13:24-29)

Some day there will be a "great divorce" and good and evil will finally be separated. No longer will evil people be able to bother those who follow God and want to serve Him.

Evil will finally be quarantined

“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.”
Rev. 21:4 (NIV)

For Reasons We Can't Comprehend Completely

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.” Deut 29:29

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!”
(Rom 11:33f)

What Are Some Purposes For Allowing Evil and Suffering?

- It IS Necessary For Character Development
- To Teach Us Moral Consequences
- Warning Of Impending Danger
- To Bring About the Greater Good
- To Bring About The Final Separation Of Good And Evil
- For Reasons We Can't Comprehend Completely

➤ But Why Can't God Get Rid of Evil?

God can not **destroy** (annihilate) all evil without destroying all good, nevertheless, He can and will **defeat** (overcome) all evil without destroying free choice.

The argument can be summarized as follows:

- 1) God is all-good and desires to defeat evil.
- 2) God is all-powerful and is able to defeat evil.
- 3) Evil is not **yet** defeated.
- 4) Therefore, it will one day be defeated.

But why would God create a world if He knew it wasn't the best possible world He could have Created?

“This fallen world is not the best possible world, but it is the best possible way to get to the best possible world.”

Norman Geisler, *Roots of Evil*, p. 59

Common Barrier in Objection #16

- But explaining the problem of moral evil doesn't explain why there is so much physical evil and suffering in the world?
- But how can the Christian God allow the Tsunami disaster to happen?

What's the question behind the question?

It could be asking:

- How can a good God allow so much physical evil and suffering in a world that is not a result of one's own free choice?

The Earth Is Under Judgment

- **Gen 3:17** says *"Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life."*
- Rom. 8:22 say "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now."

As a result, natural disasters are a natural consequence of a fallen world.

Yet Physical Evil Is Not Always A Result Of Personal Sin

- **Lk 13:1 – 5 (NASB)**
"Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? 3 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 4 "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? 5 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Physical Evil Is Not Always A Result Of Personal Sin

Jn 9:1 – 3

"As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."

The Bible Warns That These Things Will Take Place During The Last Days

- **LK 21:9 – 11 (NASB)**
"When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately." 10 Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, 11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven."

The Bible Warns That These Things Will Take Place During The Last Days

- **Lk 21:25 – 28 (NASB)**

"There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

How do we explain Physical Evil?

- **Eight** reasons for God allowing Physical Evil and Suffering

(The following answers taken from Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, p. 223)

How do we explain Physical Evil?

- Some physical evils to myself are brought on directly by my free choice.

Example:

If I abuse my body, I can get sick.

- Some physical evils to myself are brought on indirectly by my free choice.

Example:

My choice to be lazy can result in my poverty.

How do we explain Physical Evil?

- Some physical evils to others are brought on directly by the free choices of others

Example:

Abuse to a spouse or child

- Some physical evils to others are brought on indirectly by the free choices of others

Example:

Alcoholism can lead to the poverty of one's own child

Neglecting good health can lead to birth defects in one's child.

We could have prevented more people from being lost!

- Example of Physical Evil brought about by the free choices of others (Governments)

It was reported that seismologists in at least three centers of the Pacific Rim, Hawaii, Australia and Japan had picked up the undersea tremor but were helpless because they had no way to inform the relevant authorities.

The Straits Times "Think" section on Jan 2, 2005 (p. 21 – 22)

How do we explain Physical Evil?

- Some physical evils to others may be a necessary byproduct of a good process

Example:

Rain, hot air, and cool air are all necessary for food and life, but a byproduct of these forces is a tornado or Hurricane.

- Some physical evils to others may be a necessary condition for attaining a greater moral good.

Example:

Many have come to God through suffering.

How do we explain Physical Evil?

- Some physical evil is a necessary accompaniment for having a morally good physical world.

Example:

A necessary possibility of having a physical world where one can swim in water implies one can also drown.

It is enjoyable to eat good food but that carries the possibility of dying from food poisoning

How do we explain Physical Evil?

- Some physical evil is the results of supernatural forces acting against us.

Example:

Job

Another Criticism:

How can a good God allow so much unnecessary physical evil and suffering in a world that is not a result of one's own free choice?

Answer:

"There is no way for us to know that God doesn't have a morally sufficient reason for permitting certain kinds of evil. Can we honestly say that we know what the world would have looked like if we did not permit certain kinds of evil."

(Dr. William Lane Craig in a debate with Dr. Tooley on "The Existence of God" November 1994 University of Colorado)

"Take for example an analogy from chaos theory. In chaos theory, scientists tell us that even the flutter of a butterfly's wings could produce a hurricane over the Atlantic Ocean. And yet looking at the butterfly palpitating on a branch, it is impossible to predict the outcome of that event. Similarly in an evil world, say a child dying of cancer or a brutal murderer of a man, could set a ripple effect in history going, such that God's morally sufficient reasons for permitting it might not emerge until centuries later or maybe in another country. We are just not in a position to be able to make these kinds of probability judgments."

Dr. William Lane Craig in a debate with Dr. Tooley

What About Physical Evil?

- The direct / indirect result of freedom
- The by-product of good things
- A necessary condition for attaining a greater moral good.
- The necessary accompaniment for having a morally good physical world.
- The result of supernatural forces acting upon us.

God does not necessarily intervene, but is always capable of redeeming

God intervenes when needed, as He determines

God allows evil for the greater good to result either in this life or the next life

God redeems bad choices of our own and others

How Should We Help Our Friends?

There are Six things we can do:

1. Admit we do not have all the answers.
2. Comfort those who are grieving.
3. Point out that all evil and suffering has come about ultimately as a result of man's sin (Rom 5:12).
4. Point out that what has happened we have already been warned about and is a sign of Christ's return. (LK 21:9 – 11, Lk 21:25 – 28).
5. Remind them that God has an ultimate answer to this problem of evil and suffering (Matt. 13: 29-30; Rev. 21:4).
6. Use this event as an opportunity to invite others to consider the person of Jesus Christ.

Building Bridges to the Gospel

Practice Exercise

1. What is so special about Christianity? I thought that all religions basically teach the same thing.
2. How can you claim there is only one way to God? Aren't you being a bit arrogant and exclusive?
3. How can I choose Christ when my dead ancestors are separated from Him and could be separated from me?
4. What about those in other countries who have never had the opportunity to hear the gospel?
5. The Christian way of salvation is not the Buddhist way of thinking. One must earn his way to heaven.
6. How can there be a loving God when there is so much evil and suffering in the world?