

# Agathos U&E Series

## Understand and Explain

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### TRINITY

“I and My Father are One.” John 11:30

How can two separate beings be the same being? For this concept, we will use a two-dimensional world and a three-dimensional God to illustrate. If the world is two-dimensional, and the world is populated by circles, all they know is their two-dimensional existence. If you take a tube and put it through the paper, it appears as a circle to the other circles. They know nothing of the rest of the tube, and they have no concept by which they might fully understand it. Their two-dimensional universe has no tubes.

Got it? Now bend the tub into a horseshoe shape. Now it can intersect the two-dimensional plane in two separate places at the same time. Each intersection looks like a circle. To the circles in the two-dimensional universe, they are two different circles. Say one of the circles tells all the other circles around him “I and that circle are one, actually the exact same being.”

Would the circles understand? Probably not.

But would it be true?

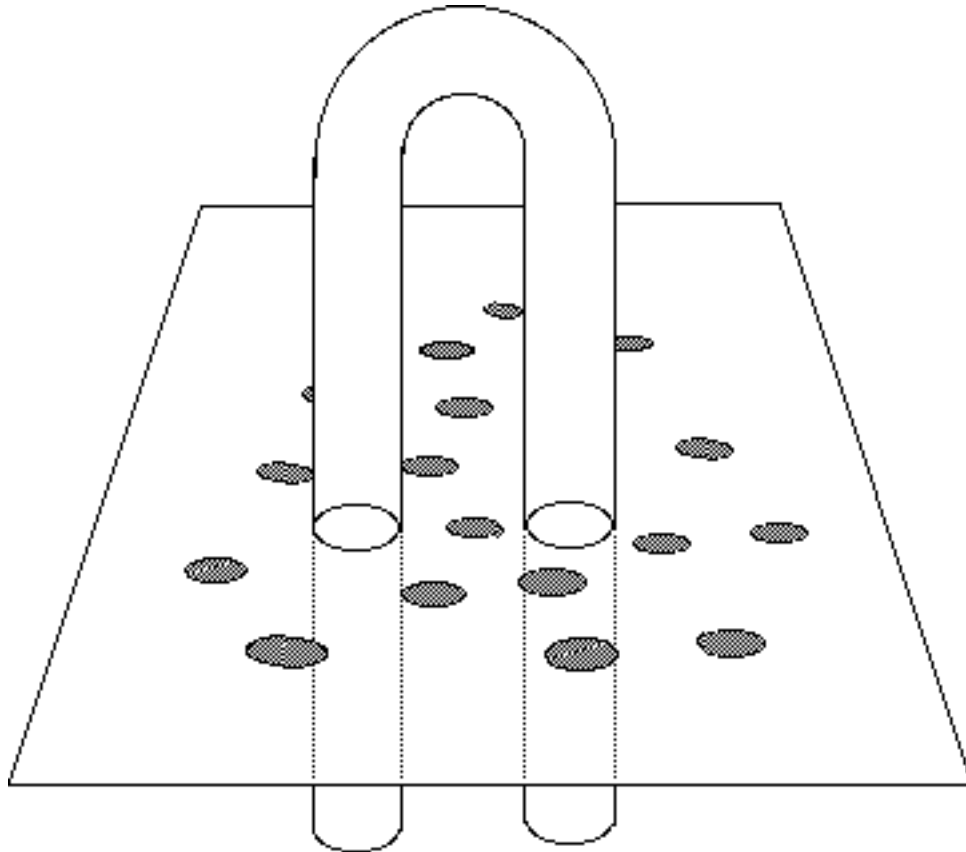
Does this model help you see how the Father and Jesus could be the same being. More importantly, do you see how this model could be used to bring some light to someone who can't understand how it could be possible (such as a Mormon friends?). Note that one circle is not the other circle, but they are both fully, completely and equally the horseshoe.

By extending the idea to a three pronged shape, you can do the same with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all being the same entity while appearing to us to be different persons (circles). Trying to fully grasp the idea of God is harder than the circles in flatworld trying to conceive of a tube, much less a horseshoe.

The Bible teaches that God is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscience, and omnitemporal. So not only does He occupy all of the flatworld in the two-dimensional universe, but He would also occupy all of the space in the three-dimensional universe. Try to imagine explaining an infinite three dimensional being to a circle who can hardly grasp infinity as a concept in two dimensions.

If, for example, God is really an infinite ten dimensional being, then how could we possibly understand Him completely and fully? No model we have of God, including the Bible, will allow us to understand God in His full and complete Glory and Majesty. It's WAY beyond us. He has revealed Himself to us, but no matter what He does with our circle minds short of giving us glorified minds in our glorified bodies (when perfection comes, then I shall know fully even as I am fully known 1 Cor 13:10-12) we will not fully grasp all that He is.

That may be part of why so many denominations can worship Him in so many different aspects and all be absolutely right.

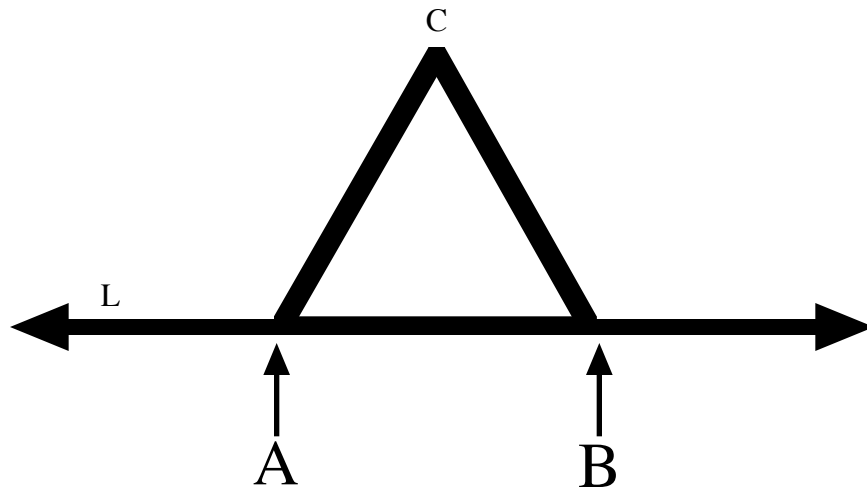


*Diagram of Hyperdimensional Model of God - "I and the Father are One."*

### **The Deity and Humanity of Christ**

Jesus Christ is God.

Jesus Christ is a Man.



*Diagram of Line Segment Model of Jesus Christ - 100% God and 100% Man*

So was He half God and half Man? No, He was fully God and fully Man. It has been called a mystery, but it has stumbled as many people as the Father and I are One. One way of dealing with this is the Line Segment Model of Jesus Christ.

Use a triangle with the base extending in both directions as a line. The triangle is the symbol for God. The line is a symbol for Mankind. Line Segment AB is the symbol for Jesus Christ. What percentage of the segment AB is part of the Triangle? What percentage is part of the Line? The segment is 100% Triangle and 100% Line. Jesus is 100% God and 100% Man.

You can do this in the Hyperdimensional Model as well. What percentage of the white circle on the left is a circle? All of it. What percentage of the circle is part of the horseshoe tube? All of it. One circle is both fully circle, and fully tube. Jesus Christ is fully Man, and fully God.

There is no part of Line Segment AB that is not part of the Triangle ABC, so 100% of AB is Triangle in nature. There is no part of Line Segment AB that is not part of Line L, so 100% of AB is Line in Nature.

## **Can God Make a Rock So Big He Can't Move It?**

Short answer: Yes.

Long Answer: Yes, and there's a Biblical precedent. Jesus Christ is God, and the Father is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. All are equally and fully God, yet when Jesus Christ was on Earth, He set aside his mantle of Godhood and did not even know the time of His return.

Both the incarnation and that missing bit of knowledge indicate that Jesus Christ was able to set aside something of His power and right as God. So the Father and Holy Spirit could make a rock so big that the Jesus Christ could not move it.

Phillipians 2:6-7 *"Who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a this to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking teh form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."*

Mark 13:32. *"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."*

## **WHERE DID GOD COME FROM?**

Genesis 1:1. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."*

John 1:1. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word with with God, and the Word was God."*

One of the most popular ideas in cosmology is the Big Bang Theory - which, in reality, is not just one theory. There are competing versions of the theory. What they have in common is that there was a bang and here we are. Also, there is a Static State Theory that basically says that the universe has always been here - which, interestingly enough, is just saying about the Universe what Christians say about God. There are other theories of origins, too, and many solutions to the problems.

But suppose the Creationists are right - whether Christian Young Earth Creationists, Jewish Creationists, Theistic Evolutionists, Muslim Creationists, Intelligent Design proponent...

What they all have in common is *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* - *Genesis 1:1*.

This leads to a question about God that is roughly the same as the question about the Universe: Where did it come from? For God, the question is "Where did God come from?"

For this, we go back to our hyperdimensional model, but we'll expand on the dimensions. Let's start with a few basics.

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 0 - Point | Think: a point on a graph   |
| 1 - Line  | Think: a line goes infinitely in both directions                      |
| 2 - Plane | Think: an infinite surface of paper (not the paper, just the surface) |
| 3 - Space | Think: the inside of an infinitely huge box                           |

Here we shift away from some of the more common ideas about dimensions, but for purposes of this discussion, we'll just assume it's true.

- 4 - Matter/Energy
- 5 - Information/Soul
- 6 - Time
- 7 - Spirit
- 8 - ?
- 9 - ?
- 10 - ?
- 11 - God

By this model, God is Infinity to the Tenth Power, or Infinity times Infinity times Infinity times Infinity times Infinity times Infinity times Infinity times Infinity times Infinity. Mathematically, this is meaningless, but it gives you an idea of the enormity of God.

We all know that if you want to make a circle, you can use the end of a can as stamp. The circle is two dimensional - it's on the surface of paper - but the can is three dimensional - it exists in space. If you had to answer the question "Where did the circle come from?" the answer would have to talk about the can which exists in a different dimension. Can you see the problem with trying to discuss "Where did the circle come from?" without talking about three dimensions? We can do it because we live and experience life in the same dimension as the can.

But what if someone asks about the can? We can talk about "stuff" - the physical matter that makes up the can. We can talk about the matter is organized to "be" a particular element or particular shape, etc. We can talk about the can having a beginning, it was made at some moment in time. But what if someone asks about where the metal came from? What about the minerals the company used to make the steel? What about where the stuff ended up in the earth to be mined? What about the Earth itself? What about the universe that lead to the Earth? Just that stamped circle on a piece of paper can lead to Ultimate Questions.

But once you get to something "bigger" or "outside" Time - then "when" part of the question suddenly stops. So the question isn't just "where" but "when." So it isn't that "something has always been" - it's that "something" MUST be "bigger" or "outside" of Time itself. Based upon our understanding of God - that would be God.

Just because “our understanding” of “God” would allow for it doesn’t make it true. But we DO have something we all pretty much agree is true, even if we don’t much understand it or think about it. So far as I know, in every way it’s been tested, it has, thus far, turned out to be true.

$$E=MC^2$$

Energy = Mass times Velocity of Light - squared.

Any “velocity” (speed for most of us who speak normal English) is Distance and Time, such as “miles” per “hour.”

So it’s Energy = Mass times Distance times Time - squared.

Without doing the math, if any one element is Infinite - then we have a problem. If God’s Energy is Infinite, then Mass, Distance, and/or Time is also Infinite.

Distance is also Infinite - since that’s the Bible’s idea of Omnipresence - that God is Everywhere - or “All Places are Here.”

But Time is also Infinite - that’s what we call Omnitemporality - that God is EveryWHEN - or “All times are now.”

If what we perceive of as Time, and what we describe as Time, is connected to Energy, Mass, and Space, then we will tend to think in terms of linear time. We think of Before and After like those are set events.

Imagine time travel. If I go back in time even one day, then were the events of this morning “earlier” or “later”? To me, right now, they were earlier. But if I travelled back to sunrise this morning, on the clock, they are later.

So if God, right here, right now, travelled back in time to start everything “in the beginning” then we would say God came from the future. In fact, that would not only solve the “Where did God come from” problem, it would solve all the prophecy problems. God is a Time Traveller answers all kinds of things.

But God is even better than a Time “Traveler.” He doesn’t need to travel! Right “now” - He IS at the beginning of Time. Right “now” - He is here with us. Right “now” - He is in the future. All this is wrapped up with the odd statement *I AM THAT I AM* in Exodus 3:14. Hebrews 13:8 says that Jesus Christ is “*the same yesterday, today and forever*” - and since we’ve already explored Trinitarian theology, we know He’s God, and He was born at a particular “time,” how can He be the “same yesterday, today and forever”?

And more on the Omnitemporality of God - Jesus in particular - we have Colosians 1:16-17. “*For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.*”

He “IS” (now) “before all things” (before Genesis 1:1). Omnitemporality.

And if “all” times are now, then “the beginning” is also “now.” The hard part to wrap your Mind around is the idea that “before time” is also “now” to God.

# IF GOD IS LOVING AND GOOD WHAT ABOUT EVIL?

There are a number of variations on the basic question of “What about Evil?”

“Did God create Evil?” This can range from God creating Satan, to God making Sin possible, to a question of why He would make humans if He already knew they would fall.

“Why does God allow Evil?” This can range from why He allowed Satan to fall, to why He allowed Adam and Eve to fall, to why He allows people to do evil things.

“Why does God allow suffering?” This can range from why He allows death, disease, torture, tyranny, pain, etc.

All of these go back to the abstract question of “What about Evil?”

## A Presumption in the Question

First, before we even begin, we have to deal with a presumption in the question. For there to BE evil, there must be an objective standard for Good and Evil. Moral relativism doesn't allow for absolutes such as Good and Evil. So the question presumes a standard, and a standard presumes a source for the standard. We call that source “God” - but others may have their own explanations. You can decide for yourself if the other standards are satisfactory, but the question does presume an ultimate Moral Law, and a Law implies a Law-maker.

## The Logic and Legitimacy of the Questions

These questions are often used to “prove” that “God” does not exist. But, of course, they prove no such thing. What they DO prove is that “if God exists, then He is a God that created a system in which evil happens and suffering happens.” It does call into question the Character of God - and, therefore, it is a legitimate question.

After all - if God did “make evil,” then what does that say about God? Doesn't that imply that God is evil? Or - at the very least - doesn't that say that God is a God of Balance, not a Good God.

If God has the power to stop evil, and He does not, then what does THAT say about God? At the least, doesn't that say that God is ambivalent about evil?

And if God knows people are suffering and He could stop it, what does THAT say about Him? At the least, doesn't that say that God is ambivalent about human suffering?

If God really IS the God of the Bible, then these are legitimate questions to ask. The Bible and Reality both tell us there IS evil, AND that God “created the heavens and the earth.” Nothing is created that He did not create, and evil “is.” The Bible teaches that evil occurs, and it teaches that God is Almighty, so God has the power to stop evil, and He doesn't. The Bible and Reality both teach us that suffering occurs, and not only does the Bible say it happens, but it even says it happens and will continue to happen to His people who are faithful! Romans 8:17. 1 Corinthians 4:12. And James 1:2 even goes so far as to say we should be joyful when we suffer!

The Crucifixion is obvious evidence that even Jesus (God in the flesh) suffered. So God does not even exempt Himself from suffering!

So Evil is a Reality. Evil persists. Suffering is a Reality. Suffering persists.

Yet, if God is Almighty, holy and pure and loving - WHY is there Evil and Suffering?

### **Did God Create Evil? A Road.**

God created Free Will. Beings whom God granted Free Will used that Free Will to create Evil. This is different than "GOD Creating Evil."

Here is a way to think about it: A Road. Some people think of Good and Evil like a road that comes to a T-intersection. Turning left is Evil. Turning right is Good. If God created the road, then didn't He create both "left/evil" and "right/good"? That's how we commonly think.

Instead, think of it this way. God created a road. There is only one road, and it goes one way. God engineered His creation to be on that road, and there is no left or right turn. It goes straight. There is a cliff on either side, and guard rails. In the beginning, no one can go off the road by accident. To get off the road, you have to smash through the guard rail on purpose. If you do, you will fall off the cliff. God - the road builder - warns you that there is only one way to do wrong - and that is to smash headlong into the guard rail and plunge off the cliff. He tells you "don't do that."

But Lucifer decides that he wants to be in charge. He decides he can do better than the road, so he decides to crash through the guard rail to "freedom" - and he convinces a third of the angels to crash through the guard rail with him to similar "freedom." They have veered from the One Road - the path of Good - and by virtue of smashing through the guard rail have fallen off the cliff to "evil."

Then God makes Man. The Serpent goes to the Garden of Eden and deceives Eve into thinking that "through the guard rail" is how she can be most like God. She falls for it (probably because she started with bad information, probably thanks to Adam - after all, one must assume that a brain personally created by God would be smart enough to remember one rule, and logical enough to think from a premise to a conclusion). Adam, however, was rebellious. He wasn't deceived. He chose to crash through the guard rail - and into "evil" - or, more specifically, into "sin." Sin means "missing the bullseye" - which, for purposes of this example, would mean "off the One Road."

From then on, we're born "off the road" and with a nature to live "off the road." We can't get back on the road by ourselves - but we do have moments when we do things just as though we were on the road - but we wander around it, "off roading" so to speak, and while we may go in the same direction from time to time, we are born and live off that road.

### **Delegating Creation**

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." - Genesis 1:1.

But God didn't *make* evil. God made Free Will - and He delegated the rest to Adam. God didn't name the animals - Adam named the animals - one of the first exercises of Adam's ability to think and choose. He created names for the animals.

Then God made Eve. Adam was in charge. Some would say because he was the man, others because he was the husband, and still others because he was older. He knew things Eve did not know, and one of those was "do not eat the fruit from the tree in the middle of the Garden."

Genesis 2:7 tells us Adam was formed of the ground and given life by the “breath of God” - making him unique. Genesis 2:16 tells us what God told Adam. Genesis 2:20 tells us about naming the animals. Then Genesis 2:22 is the making of Eve (who, by the way, is the only living thing God did not make out of dirt). Note that the command and the naming happened before Eve was created. So it is logical to assume that Adam was made responsible for explaining to Eve what had gone before. There wasn’t that much - so it should have been easy. Animal names and the One Rule.

God created a System. Creation after that was largely delegated to His Created Beings. Science is the process of discovering information and details about the functioning of the System. Technology is the use of that information to make new things that would not exist naturally. Our ability to create technology is part of the “delegated power to create” - as are the arts. To create technology, we must align ourselves with Creation. We don’t get to make things “however we want” and have them work because we want them to work. We have to make things in obedience to physics in order for them to function properly. Even the arts have rules. There are things that look good to most people, and things that are ugly to most people. There are sounds and sound combinations that are pleasing to most people, and combinations that grate on the human ear.

Lucifer and the Angels used their Free Will ability to “crash through the guard rail” to create evil. Then the Serpent deceived Eve and got Adam to rebel against the One Rule - “crashing through the guard rail” - and bringing “sin” into this world. Adam had used the power God gave him to have “dominion” (Genesis 1:26) over the earth to create evil in the world.

### **Why Allow Wrong Choices at All?**

Imagine giving someone a Math Test. You get out your scantron, and you open the test. The first question is this:

“What is  $2+2$ ?”

The choices you are given are:

A. 4

How many people would get a perfect score on such a test? Everyone. So if everyone gets 100% on the test, does that mean everyone has perfect math skills? No. There were no wrong choices.

For a Right Choice to have any meaning, you must also have a Wrong Choice.

That’s why the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, or some similar choice, HAD to be in the Garden of Eden. God gave Adam ONE RULE. Just one. “Don’t eat of the tree in the middle of the Garden.” God even told him the consequences of breaking that one rule. “if you do, you’ll die.” Genesis 2:17. (If you want more detail on that word, it’s interesting to note that the word here isn’t just “die” - but also “kill” - which gets into a whole other subject that explains many things. Maybe we’ll get into it sometime.) God warned Adam that eating that fruit would introduce Death into a world that was presently Deathless.

Isaiah 14:12 is a great illustration of the fact that Lucifer himself had a choice. He chose to defy God. He had access to the throne room of God even after his fall (see Job). He accuses us before God (Revelation 12:10). He made a knowing choice - and became the embodiment of evil. Jude 1:6 tells us that angels had a choice, too.

This is still true today. We have a Choice to make. Every time we're faced with options, we have a Choice to make.

God granted us Free Will. He said "I've built One Way, but I'll give you the choice to reject that way." Evil is as a result of that.

Why would God grant Free Will if it would lead to evil? Because Love also requires Free Will. Good Character also requires Free Will. Receiving credit for the Right Answer requires the existence of a Wrong Answer. Evil is the result of Wrong Answers.

Even just "not perfect" means making one or more wrong choices. If less than morally perfect choices become normal to a person, then amoral or immoral choices are easier. When immorality is normal, evil is easier. When evil is an easy choice, then we call that person evil.

### **Why Does God Allow Evil?**

If God allows Evil, that means that there is something more important that God is seeking to maintain - and Evil is an unfortunate byproduct of Free Will and Free Will is a necessary component of something God is doing that is SO important that He is more willing to tolerate evil - even though it would cost Him His own Life/His Son's life to solve the problem.

We understand that Evil is a byproduct of Free Will. So the solution to Evil is....

1. Eliminate Free Will.
2. Eliminate Wrong Options.
3. Eliminate beings who have Free Will.

He cannot eliminate Free Will without also eliminating Love, Character, and giving credit for Right Answers. He cannot eliminate Wrong Options because Free Will is irrelevant without a Choice. If He eliminates all beings who have Free Will, then there are no beings left to have Love, Character, credit, or make any choices.

He started pretty close to Number 2. He created the Garden of Eden with only ONE wrong option - and Adam took it. By the time you added Cain and Abel to the world - take a look at how bad it got then. We had the first murder - which we still consider one of the worst crimes.

As for Number 3, He started with only one human being with Free Will, and then He made a second one who also had Free Will. We already talked about how Cain used his Free Will.

He flooded the whole world and thus eliminated all but 8 human Free Wills, but it didn't take long for wrong Free Will choices to begin again.

He confused the languages to reduce the ability of a group of people to make a really wrong choice, but the people mostly headed off in different directions and continued to make different wrong choices.

When some of those people, the ones in Sodom and Gomorrah, made choices that were bad enough, He personally saw to the destruction of those two cities.

So think about it: He IS willing to do #2 (Eliminate Wrong Options) and #3 (Eliminate being who have Free Will) when it is necessary to do so - yet...

He didn't eliminate Hitler, Stalin, Lenin, Mao, or Genghis Khan. He didn't stop the Concentration Camps, the Rwanda massacres, or the gulags. He didn't stop people from doing slavery in an evil way. He didn't stop the Black Plague.

If you consider that He flooded the world because things got so bad, that He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because things got so bad - then how bad were they? God is obviously willing to step in *sometimes*. But the last time He seemed to personally destroy an entire culture was Sodom and Gomorrah. Why?

We'll get back to that in a moment.

Even when God takes action, He STILL doesn't Eliminate Free Will. Everyone, good and evil, saint and sinner, has a choice. We can do good, or we can choose to do evil. God seems to think Free Will is SO important that He would rather watch His Creation fall than take away Free Will. He would rather flood the world than take away Free Will. He would rather destroy cities, and impose the whole wrath of God thing on His Own SON! Free Will is THAT important.

When the situation warrants it, He will limit evil options. Physics alone does much of that. Consequences do a lot of the rest. But, ultimately, God has a plan to deal with evil...

Humans.

It's Evil Free Will vs. Good Free Will - and God stacks the deck in favor of Good.

When the Serpent was deceiving Eve - God has His Man there to protect her. (Genesis 3:6) He didn't do his job.

At every turn where people are falling into sin, there was someone there to warn them, to stand against them, to do *something*. Cain and Abel was a one on one altercation. The genealogy of Noah tells us that God provided at least one line to provide lessons in righteousness to the world, and He gave the world a 120 year warning. (Genesis 6:3)

God said to fill the earth (Genesis 9:1) and the people all camped in one place to build the Tower of Babel is direct contradiction to God's command (Genesis 11:4). Noah was still around. Shem was still around. They knew better. They did it anyway. God handled it.

When Lot was taken by the four kings, Abraham and 318 trained men got him back. (Genesis 14:14) But when it was time for Sodom and Gomorrah to be destroyed, God did that personally. (Genesis 19:24)

In Exodus, God handled Egypt personally.

But then things start to change. God does less and less. He expects us to do more and more. He gave manna to the Israelites, but made them go out of the camp and gather it themselves. He provided water, but He did it through a spring. He gave them help in battle, but He made them fight. He took down the walls of Jericho, but made them fight all the people. It seemed as though God suddenly stopped doing for them. Then He merely helped for a while. Then He even stopped doing that much most of the time. His direct intervention seemed to get more and more rare. Why?

Because it is OUR responsibility. God put His Man in the Garden of Eden, and it was Adam's job to protect Eve. Only Adam knew who the Serpent was. Only Adam was told the One Rule. Adam was THERE and could have corrected Eve when what she said wasn't what God said, but (probably) what Adam said. He watched when he should have taken action.

The line from Adam to Noah was strong enough to survive in a “world filled with violence” but not strong enough to stop all the violence, so God handled it.

Abraham was evidently powerful enough to rescue Lot, but not powerful enough to destroy two cities, so God didn't have a man who could handle it, so He took care of it personally.

Israel could not free themselves from Egypt, so God handled it. Israel could not overcome the walls of Jericho, so God handled the walls. What humans COULD do, He expected us to do.

Just like we can't save ourselves from sin. We can't buy our own way into heaven. So God took care of that for us. He does what we cannot do. God does what is NOT a human responsibility - but when it IS our responsibility, He doesn't. His intervention becomes rare because the responsibility is ours.

So, ultimately, the question isn't “Why does God allow Evil?” The real question is “Why do WE allow Evil?”

## SUFFERING

### Why Does God Allow Suffering?

First, there is Good Suffering and Bad Suffering. An example of Good Suffering is the soreness you get after a good workout - you're tired, sore, and you may feel like you're in pain, but you're getting stronger or more fit. Few people ask why God allows us to work out hard, or why God allows people to scrimp and save to buy a house, or why God allows a career minded person to work long hours.

Note that all these things are done with an eye to Moving Forward. This is an important concept. Remember this idea, because we'll use it again shortly.

We lift weights. If we're serious about getting strong, we lift as much as we can for a few repetitions. We get sore. We get tired. We probably need a spotter to help us avoid injury. We probably need supplements. Why do we do that? To build muscle. To get strong. To get fit. If we do it right, that's the result we get.

But what if we do it wrong? We might lift too much weight - and we get hurt. We might do too many reps - and get hurt. We might train without a spotter - and either limit our gains or get hurt. We could skip the nutrition and supplements - and gain little.

If we get hurt, we need to take it easy for a while. If we're seriously hurt, we need help. We need a medical professional to put us back together. Why do we know how to do things like that? Because people keep getting hurt, and we, as the human race, keep trying to figure out how to fix that. Meanwhile, the people actually getting hurt, if they're smart, also try to figure out ways to stop getting hurt. Some do that by quitting whatever they were doing when they got hurt. Some do it by doing the same thing - only not as intensely. Some avoid injury by learning how to do it better or by getting stronger.

So some people move backward. Some move forward. Some back off a little, but with the goal of moving forward more effectively. Basically you have two options - backward moving options or forward moving options.

Which brings us back to the original question: Why Does God Allow Suffering?

## **Bad Suffering - Consequences for Own Actions**

One reason there is suffering is that we do things wrong - and we pay a price. Why does a smoker suffer with lung disease? Why does a habitual eater suffer with obesity, and an obese person suffer with diabetes? Why does a speeder suffer with the expense of tickets, the suspension of his license, or even the costs of a single car accident?

On the lower levels of culpability, why does someone who relied on being perpetually employed at a particular business suffer from unemployment or layoffs? If the unemployment rate is 5%, a worker should expect and plan for being unemployed about 5% of time, and should be planning based upon how long it may take to replace his income. So in this case, financial distress is a natural byproduct of becoming unemployed without savings, and becoming unemployed is a natural byproduct of being a worker in a society that does not guarantee full employments.

If God removed consequences for one's own actions, there would be no practical reason to do right things and avoid doing wrong things - and there would be no practical reason to do things correctly and not do things incorrectly if there was no a consequence to wrong and incorrect.

Most people aren't talking about this kind of suffering when they question God.

## **Bad Suffering - Consequences for Others Actions**

Suffering by people who did NOT bring it upon themselves is the suffering people most often complain about when asking the question "Why does God allow suffering?"

There is another logical problem, here. We, as societies, tell people what they can and cannot do. One of the fundamental reasons for almost all laws is because the actions of a person will affect another person or a lot of people.

If there were NO consequences to other people, then what right would any of us have to tell someone they cannot do a thing.

"It's not like I'm hurting anyone" is a common defense by someone who's wrong actions are likely to only result in harm to himself. But a lot of actions DO affect others, and we, as a people, have the responsibility to stop people from hurting other people - which we do most often by creating governments that have the power to pass and enforce laws and regulations.

So when there will be suffering because of the actions of others, it becomes our responsibility to do what we can to mitigate that harm so that people do not harm others. It is not God's job - it has been delegated to us as a people.

When people suffer from the actions of others, the question is "Why do WE allow this?"

Even in more direct cases - those of us who have trained for self-defense know that there are bad guys in the world - and that some percentage of us will be targetted by these bad guys. So, rather than rely on the fact that the law says "don't do that" to them, and the fact that the police will try to find them and arrest them after the fact - we learn the necessary skills to stop a significant percentage of the likely violence.

Basically, we do on a small scale what the laws try to do on a larger scale - we take responsibility to make sure that innocent people do not suffer for the wrong actions of others.

## **Bad Suffering - Probability and Outcome**

This is another category of suffering about which many people complain: Probability and Outcome. In undeveloped countries - which is every country in history - the infant mortality rate was often 50%. It was just a Fact of Life, and people accepted it because that's just the way life goes. A family who lost a child certainly didn't like it, but everyone understood that it was "normal." The advent of modern medicine has dropped infant mortality rates so low that the loss of a child is considered tragic - no longer an "ordinary event" - but an exceptionally bad event.

Much of suffering is like this. It's "normal," but so unlikely that when it touches us, it feels tragic. It has never been regarded as a good thing or a desired thing - just normal. But something that happens once in two times or once in a million times is equally normal - but when the odds go against you on a one in a million shot, it feels like a curse.

Even so, again, these are things that fall within the responsibility of mankind. We've addressed infant mortality very effectively, but not perfectly. There are many conditions that afflict people that we have addressed very effectively - but not perfectly - and some that have been wiped out. A premise of modern medicine is that every condition or nearly every condition has a way to avoid it, a way to cure it, or, at least, a way to cure it. Thus, medical research progresses.

Why is there any probability at all? It's a problem. And problem solving is up to us. Again, the question is "What are WE doing about it?"

# WHAT IS FAITH?

We develop intellectual faith at a fairly young age. Sometimes our faith is misplaced, sometimes it isn't. As we learn more and mature, we learned what can and what cannot be trusted - and even in that we make mistakes.

The Bible says *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1.*

The word “hoped for” means having trust that a thing will be or trusting that a thing is true. In this context with “substance” it means a real thing, a Reality, of something we trust is true.

Evidence is proof. Things not seen means we cannot directly know or directly observe the thing in which we feel we have enough evidence to convinced of a Reality.

Let's use an example that everyone understands... Counting.

## Counting Faith

When we are young, we learn the concept of counting on our fingers. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. The number 10 is the beginning of an idea. When you get past 9, you go back to zero and put a 1 in front of the number. That 1 becomes 2 for 20, etc. At 99, when that last 9 becomes a 0, the other 9 becomes a 0, and we add another 1. We learn the names of the bigger numbers - hundreds. Later, we get to the concept of thousands, and commas show up in our numbers. We keep putting more numbers and commas in our numbers as we get bigger and bigger numbers. Millions, billions, trillions... and the list goes on.

At a fairly young age we learn the idea that number just keep on going and going. There is no such thing as “The Biggest Number.” It's the beginning of a concept called Infinity.

But we don't actually start at 0 and count to “the biggest number” - we have faith that that numbers keep going. We learn a concept. We learn the logic of the concept. We learn that based upon what we DO know, that we can trust that the thing we DON'T “know” is true - in fact, we trust is so much that we say that we “know” - when what we're really doing is having Faith. We have evidence. We have not seen all the numbers, but we understand how it works. Our understanding and definitions of numbers and counting and how it all works if the substance of this thing we trust called “counting.” Even if we don't know what the numbers are called, we know that the numbers keep going.

Eventually, we learn about negative numbers, fractions, decimals... and these all have Infinity as part of our understanding - even if we never really think about it. We just accept by faith because we understand the Truth we know, and based upon that, we can trust that numbers keep going backwards, too. We learn fractions, and we learn that no matter how small a fraction, it can always be smaller and never quite be zero. We learn that no matter how many decimal places we have, we can always have more. We accept that there are an infinite number of numbers just between 0 and 1. In fact, there are mathematical proofs for that, but few of us know or understand such things (including this author).