

Summary

Chapter 1 has outlined two of the five ideas that fully solve the problem of evil for us humans ... but we must believe the Literal Bible to see it.

The two essential realities outlined in Chapter 1 are 1) the origin of evil in this world: evil was/is created by the entirely Good God, and 2) the three-part definition of the evil God created: a) humans created absolutely free to choose a bad option, b) the bad option, and c) the bad consequence(s) that happen when a bad option is chosen.

Also outlined in Chapter 1 is the division of the responsibilities for evil between God and humans. God is responsible for what He created: the three parts above, and the world in which the consequence of each choice must happen. Yet, God is not responsible for any of the bad evil experienced in our world, because only humans make choices upon the earth. We humans are responsible for our choices and for the effects of our choices. (Part 2 will expand upon the fact that the condition of this world is entirely the responsibility of humans.)

We add here that the Bible also helps us by declaring many good options, and in instructing us to choose more of them; right words and right actions are needed in order to expand life and blessing in our world and to shape our world for the better. (See Proverbs.) The Bible also identifies bad words and bad actions to avoid, and declares the corresponding evil consequences that damage our world when bad options are chosen. Honoring the Bible is also a vital part of relating properly to God, Who will prompt us in right ways and help us walk in them. With the Bible, and with God's direction and help, we learn to live in sync with His creation.

We do not have to know everything in order to avoid evil and to choose good options, but knowing evil's origin and definition makes our 'whys' manageable, there is more. Chapter 2 addresses many questions about the origin, definition, and responsibilities for evil. Not every relevant question of every person will be considered, and no question will be fully answered. Knowing some basics about evil does not answer why God created our world to work this way, or keep us from imagining other types of worlds that our Good God could have, or 'should have' created.

Beginning with Chapter 3, the reality of authority is considered extensively; this answers: "Why does God let evil hit our world?" Part 2 helps us know how God relates to us regarding specific evil events from hitting our world. Among other truths, we will learn why God does not stop evil from hitting our world.

Chapter 2:

Questions Concerning The Nature and Origin of Evil

The Questions considered in this chapter are listed below. They build upon the definition and description of evil in Chapter 1. Some Responses are only begun, and many are expanded in the coming chapters or in Books 3 and 4.

The questions are:

1. *Even knowing why evil exists, we want to ask, "Why did God create evil at all?"*
2. *For God to create every bad option, always, for everyone, is questionable.
Do not bad people, who go their own way, create their own bad options?*
3. **Q:** *Why is evil so compounded in our world? Why are there such horrible effects – endless and worsening? Why did God create such a severe consequence – death – to enter the world should Adam choose that first bad option?*
4. *Why did God create this world with so much evil possible ... even pervasive? Why create any bad option or evil consequence? or the potential to rank one option as superior to another? Would not an infinite number of equally good options be enough to honor the freedom God created in us, or to express ourselves and make choices? Could God create evil, but not give humans or any other being the ability to choose the bad option?*
5. *How can the God of the Bible be good? Is not this God – flooding the world, authorizing genocide, etc. – a bad or evil God? Who wants to serve a God responsible for creating a world that becomes such a mess, and even worse, at His direction?*
6. *Can those who do not choose their situation, be held responsible too?*
7. *Is this view of evil too simplistic? How is one choice different from any other choice in quality or effect?*
8. *Why does God allow so much evil to happen and to continue?*
9. *How do we explain natural disasters and other evils that have nothing to do with human choice?*
10. *Is it mechanical? Is God simply a rule-enforcer? Once He established that the proper consequence happens when humans make a choice, does God sit back and watch, having no further part in what happens on the earth?*
11. *Why did God not tell Adam all that would happen when he sinned?*

12. *Did Satan or Lucifer create any evil? How did that being come to have the option to rebel against God? was that option 'automatic' as an alternative to serving God? what was this evil option?
Is not Satan responsible for much evil in the world?*
13. *How "evil" are Satan and the fallen angels?*
14. *Is any evil or evil option independent of God?*
15. *Is not evil a part of a cosmic battle or rivalry against good / God?*
16. *If God created evil, is He not responsible for it?*
17. *Cannot God destroy all evil now, and be done with it once and for all?*
18. *Does God influence the choices humans make? to what degree?*

1. Q: *Even knowing why evil exists, we want to ask, "Why did God create evil at all?"*

R: Part of the answer, previously mentioned, is that neither the bad option nor the evil consequence could exist unless God created them. God is entirely good. Evil is not found in God. If anything evil, if any option to God or good were to exist, then God must create it.

This applies as well to God's continual creation of bad options for each individual; they would not exist if God did not create them. If God were to stop this ongoing creation of bad options and their consequences, then bad options would come only from the pre-defined natural and spiritual laws that allow, for example, the harmful effects of a physical fall or of a fall precipitated by pride. These would still include much in attitude and action, as in the Book of Proverbs.

Another part of the answer is God's desire for relationship: a major purpose for creating humans in His image. People and God can relate to each other, and do so intimately. The nature of that relationship would be different if we were not able to choose a bad option or experience a damaging consequence. Our lives could devolve into living from a list, and even become mechanical. We need to draw near to God for wisdom when faced with difficult choices.

God knows the kind of relationship He was making possible, and how to give it the best potential, therefore the ability to choose freely from available options is essential. We accept God's way in creation; we choose God's way in relationship. If we reject God's way, and choose bad options, then we and our world turn ugly. So, we learn more of God's ways, and choose better.

2. Q: *For God to create every bad option, always, for everyone, is questionable. Do not bad people, who go their own way, create their own bad options?*

R: God's specific command was: "Do not eat from one special, created tree, or you will die." By this, God created for Adam both the bad option and the bad consequence. Although it may be difficult to see in Isaiah 45:7, God says that He is the One "creating evil", an action that is ongoing. It means that God, by His Own word, creates every bad option and consequence?

In the entire Bible, only Isaiah 45:7 specifies God's creation of evil, which is a common Hebrew word also meaning wickedness, calamity, etc. God creates the amoral bad option, its consequence, and people free to choose from options. People cause every visible, damaging effect on the earth.

The world changed after Adam's sin: Adam was made by God from dust, but every other person, except Jesus, is corrupted at conception (Romans 5:12). In addition, "*I have writhed in depravity, and in sin has my mother conceived me.*" (Psalm 51:5) and "*The heart is deceitful above all ...*" (Jeremiah 17:9)

The question is: Where do bad options originate now? from corrupted humans or from God or both? The downward progression of Romans 1 seems to indicate both: God gradually abandons those who are ungrateful and choose not to acknowledge Him. First, He no longer confronts their corrupt fleshly lusts, but "*gives them*" to their lustful uncleanness. Second, *God gives them to their vile affections*, and their corrupt desires rule them. Finally, *God gives them to their reprobate minds*, and their distorted thinking goes unchecked.

In Romans 1, God stops creating bad options for some persisting in choosing wrong. God's bad options would come from His good and gracious heart and from His all-wise perspective on the best bad options for a person to reject. When God creates a bad option, a person learns the good choice by talking with God; God guides in the best paths.

Those declining in Romans 1, have rejected the Good God, make bad choices as directed by a corrupted flesh, heart, and mind, and have no check on proud, selfish lusts. Life without God as a good, loving Shepherd is miserable,

God always creates bad options and consequences. It is hoped that every one reading this acknowledges the Good Creator and His literal revelation in the Bible, thanks Him, and talks with Him about the available options, to learn and choose the best options.

3. Q: *Why is evil so compounded in our world? Why are there such horrible effects - endless and worsening? Why did God create such a severe consequence - death - to enter the world should Adam choose that first bad option?*

R: One part of the answer is the great potential for the human as created by God - a potential that must be at least as great for good as it is for evil. The

world also has good potential. Although we view this world as being tragic, hopeless, and on an ugly downhill path sinking deeper into misery, I believe that the God of the Bible sees better for our world ... blessings beyond its tragic potential. Fulfillment of that may require some judgment upon evil, and the church acting like Jesus' Body, even Jesus actually reigning on earth. God has really good plans for us and for our world.

With the potential for good, we should consider that the severe consequence of death and decay could be countered. Although we remain mortal and see these evil effects happen, life and good and blessing are available for the choosing. We could live our days with hope, and confidently seek the blessed ways of our God.

Every answer must be based on the clear Biblical reality that God creates evil: 1) the option to good, 2) the appropriate bad consequence, and 3) each person free to choose a bad option. Believing the Bible, we start there.

4. *Q: Why did God create this world with so much evil possible ... even pervasive? Why create any bad option or evil consequence? or the potential to rank one option as superior to another? Would not an infinite number of equally good options be enough to honor the freedom God created in us, or to express ourselves and make choices? Could God create evil, but not give humans or any other being the ability to choose the bad option?*

R: Ideas such as these envision a 'better' world, where no evil consequence is seen or experienced. In such a world, bad actions have no negative consequences or there is no way to cause them. We would not need to deal with evil if we had no freedom to be bad, or no ability to choose against good, or if no choice had bad consequences. These worlds, and others we may imagine, have no evil or no potential evil, and we consider them attractive in our world of freedom. They sound nice, but are all unknown to us.

When considering such possibilities, many questions are raised:

Could we still be created in the image of God? Would we have a real choice? or the same potential for good if not able to make choices having bad consequences? How would it change people, culture, family, relationships? What would be a virtue, or an honor, or a challenge in such a world? What would responsibility look like? Could we be the same kind of person in a world without actual or manifest evil, or the potential for more evil?

Considering Cain again, he acted with immaturity and became visibly bad. This was him choosing bad options and experiencing harmful consequences. What might he have been without this evil ... what would Cain's life be like if he had not been able to choose with harmful effect? or if he could not be bad?

Would he then have the option to 'grow up' personally? Or could he be bad without any consequence upon himself, or upon his world? Or would he, and all people, be some kind of permanent perfection? All we can do is imagine.

Determining whether such a world would be preferable is difficult. Not only do we want to be the same kind of a person that we actually are, but most want the same kind of world that we now have, just without the bad. Our desires for a better world are greatly influenced by the one we have. It seems unlikely that we could live in a different kind of world and remain the same kind of person. We can second guess God, but we can only imagine and speculate since we live in the world as it has been created and made.

In our world, strength and might often act to put down/defeat/eliminate weakness and right. That degrades and becomes undesirable, so we imagine a world in which everyone could be equal in every way ... but who wants that? Responsible choice, in the world we have, looks better and better.

From the beginning, all damage in our world is the result of human choices. We could make our world better by making better choices. Even more, we could bring it more in line with God's good desires by talking with Him about our options before making our choices. In addition, the Bible has much more that offers hope. We choose well and expect blessings to increase. God and His plans for our world give us great potential ... we can take part in that now, or not.

Another option is nothing – maybe no God, or just no creation. In fact, no life or nothing at all would seem to be the most likely possibility. But we are here, and most of us are happy about that.

5. Q: *How can the God of the Bible be good? Is not this God – flooding the world, authorizing genocide, etc. – a bad or evil God? Who wants to serve a God responsible for creating a world that becomes such a mess, and even worse at His direction?*

R: The answer is that God is entirely good. The answer to why the world is messed-up is a proper understanding of the responsibilities of God and humans. When we look at the tragic chaos of our world, it is proper to conclude that something went wrong, but that something is not the Good God – it is wrong human choices over the millennia since Adam's first wrong choice.

Two wrong responses to the world being a mess are: 1) abandoning the Good Creator God, or 2) imagining an entirely mythical 'god' or 'spirit' to be higher and better than the Genesis' God, Who is seen by these imaginative people to be a lower, inferior deity who did a poor job in creating the earth, which turned out to be this messed-up, 'second-rate' material world in which we live.

Most of us do not need to seek and learn other wrong responses. Instead, we seek the Good God of the Bible, Who directs us to choose good options that both bless our world and begin to reverse some damaging effects we see.

6. Q: *Can those who do not choose their situation, be held responsible too?*

R: Actually, none of us chooses much about our situation, at least for the first years. Our parents and family and their circumstances are not chosen, and neither are our country, our city, our home, our decade, and more. While we are young, many options will be limited by those necessarily having some control over our lives, such as at home or school. Those limits are reduced for most of us while we age, but options are limited even for those blessed in the prime of life. In every case, each person has the freedom to make choices from the options available, and each person is responsible for those choices.

The influence of 'unchosen' circumstances can greatly affect our choices. There is a large difference on why people choose to do what they do. One person, having grown with encouragements, instructions, and examples of relating to God and feeding on His Spirit-taught Word in the Bible, will likely have a heart and mind and resources and support to choose God and His good ways. Another person, having instead the input of natural media and information, with friends who seek to cause damage and harm, will have a foundation for choosing bad options. While beginning influences can be strong, each personal choice still matters. A bad start can be hard to overcome, but we grow and make more of our own choices; when we choose well, our life will improve. Everyone can choose good options; no life is fated.

Every life is different: 1) each person has a unique set of options available, 2) each person responds differently to his/her inner voice, which initially suggests good choices, 3) each person has unique social pressures, 4) each person develops a unique set of objectives and rules for living, 5) each person responds differently to the order and authorities in her/his life, and etc. Whatever our past, each of us can choose more good options.

We might think of horrible situations, perpetrated by some who coldly do evil: seeking money or power, they absolutely mistreat others. Thinking of a child slave, for example, makes normal people weep. We cry ... and ask: Why? Most of us see it as an unimaginable tragedy – a child never having had helpful training, still very young, being abused, having every external action determined by someone else. We must mitigate this. Yet, even a helpless person, so completely enslaved, chooses internal attitudes and responses. Essential details of God's good ways are part of every person born, and we can choose those ways or not. All choices of every person make a difference.

Difficult but somewhat less limiting are chains put upon people by authoritarian governments, by controlling others in relationship, by some "Type A" business leaders, and more. Those who manipulate and abuse people under their authority are making wrong choices for which they are responsible. Yet, even having greatly reduced options, manipulated people are also responsible for their external and internal responses. No bad response yields good results. Regardless of how miserable the choices of another person can make someone's life, wrong responses are never justified.

It is possible for good people to get entirely turned around; they become insensitive to evil options and their consequences and do not hesitate to choose badly; they do not see their actions as evil or the damage they are doing to the good. Hitler seemed able to turn people to embrace an evil standard to this degree.

Even so, every one living has a unique set of options, and each individual choice matters ... one choice and then another, one step and then another. The direction of a life can be corrected ... each individual is responsible.

7. Q: *Is this view of evil too simplistic? How is one choice different from any other choice in quality or effect?*

R: No, it is not *too simplistic*. The foundational definition of evil is simple, but not simplistic. It explains our God-created evil, but not the cascading symptoms or consequences of people choosing bad options. The definition is simple, and leads to the whole story, but the whole story is complex.

Consider two of Cain's choices: 1) Offer the wrong sacrifice, and 2) Murder his brother. Both were wrong choices, but each had a drastically different impact on the world. In addition, the option to murder was not available at first – God did not create that bad option for Cain until he had made other wrong choices. With each choice, both Cain and his world changed. God, in His wisdom, appropriately adapted Cain's next bad choice and consequence.

The entire condition of our world is explained by choice and consequence. Choices and effects accumulate. Good and bad consequences interact. In our living, every choice is made in the context of choices having been made throughout the history of the earth. One person may be caught up in the progression of large forces going one direction ... and resist or not. Another person may be born into a world going 'nowhere' ... and choose to continue there or not. The possibilities are endless.

Even so, God created evil; each time a person chooses a bad option, that choice yields harmful consequences. A single choice – good or bad – could change the direction of a life; it is choices that matter.