

# Are You There God? Part 2

## Art:

Welcome to MC3 today, we are so glad that you are here. We started a new sermon series last week, where many of you submitted some really deep and thought provoking theological questions last month. And let me just say that you are a deep thinking group. There were a lot of really, really good questions. Last week we answered some questions centered around the Bible. So if you missed last week's sermon, we invite you to go online and check it out.

Today we are going to tackle some questions pertaining to evil's existence and how much control God has over evil, the world, and all the bad things that we see happening in our world. But before we jump in, we wanted to remind you of the goals of this series: **1. We want to lead you to the Truth. 2. We want to lead you to seek God. 3. We want you to be satisfied with Jesus.** Remember the only question we really need to have nailed down in this life, is the question of what to do with Jesus. So our hope is that at the end of the day, you will be satisfied with Him. And it's good to have Will up here today, and so we are going to tag-team today on these tough, but all-important questions. So with that here's our first question . . .

## **What caused evil to come into existence? If Satan sinned, does God really control everything?**

So I think the first thing we need to do is define evil. I think we tend to think of "good" as keeping the "moral law" and "evil" as breaking the "moral law." And there's no doubt that involved in keeping the law are good actions, and conversely breaking the law are evil actions. But that really doesn't get down to the heart of evil. The Heart of Evil is desiring something or someone above God. That is evil. But what caused evil to come into existence? I love how speaker, writer, and apologist Ravi Zacharias put it, "**There are only four possibilities of God and creation:**

- 1. God would create nothing.**
- 2. God would create a world where there was no such thing as good and evil.**
- 3. He would create a world where we would only choose good.**
- 4. Create this world where there is the possibility of good and evil with the freedom given to us.**

The world we live in is the only one where **love is possible** . . . God in giving us freedom, gave us the greatest possible gift we could ever have, with the greatest possible vulnerability at the same time. And once you know Him and follow Him and love Him and enjoy His love, you will realize for the sake of love and the sake of that relationship with you, He gives you that

freedom. There are only two kinds of destinies that you have – you can bend your knee to God and say to Him, ‘Your will be done’. Which is Good. Or we can refuse to bend that knee to Him and God says to us, ‘your will be done’.”—Ravi Zacharias

And here’s the thing, evil is NOT a created thing; it’s the absence of Good. I know it sounds like we are splitting hairs, but it’s a hair that is worth splitting. Evil is simply the absence of good. We call the absence of dirt, a hole. Holes are real, but they only exist because of the absence of something else. If a person is asked, “Does cold exist?” the answer would likely be “yes.” However, this is incorrect. Cold does not exist. Cold is the absence of heat. Similarly, darkness does not exist; it is the absence of light. Evil is the absence of good, or better, evil is the absence of “God”.

This is why God put the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the middle of the garden. Without that tree, we are all robots doing only good with no capacity to love and no capacity to “Desire God above everything.” And what we see in scripture is that Adam and Eve were perfectly content to desire God above everything else, until, Satan comes along and points out to them the possibility to love themselves ABOVE God.

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### Will:

Yes. God has the power to control and take over everything if he wanted too. I.E. The flood... And when Satan sinned, God could have intervened and wiped out Satan immediately. For whatever reason, He didn’t. Just like us, Satan had free will. Angels could choose to serve God, or serve ourselves. e was so wrapped up in his own beauty, power, and intelligence, that he began to long for the Glory that belonged to God. Although this is the first time that sin entered the universe, there was always the choice to. Satan just kicked it off. Like Art said, real Love comes with choice. Just because God doesn’t intervene and stop whatever it is, doesn’t mean He isn’t involved or in control.

But make sure you get this: Satan is only moving in his God-confined space. Mark 1:27 says that “He gives orders to impure spirits and they obey Him.” So Jesus can control every little aspect of every literal thing if he chooses too. So why does God allow Satan to have power? Maybe God allows it so His glory shines even brighter when we beat temptation.

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### Art:

**Does God or the Devil control what happens on earth?**

Wow, what a great question. We know from scripture that God, for reasons that are higher than ours, gives Satan some control, but there are limits and parameters that God puts on Satan and his "kingdom." 1. Satan is considered the Prince of the Air. In Ephesians 2:2 we are told, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2** in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." 2. Satan is considered the god of this world. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

And so he has been **allowed** to have some power on the earth. But we see that God has set some limits on that power. We see this especially in Matthew 8, where Jesus interacts with demons. Matthew 8:28-32 gives us some great insight into the power of God vs. the power of the devil, "When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. **29** "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us **before the appointed time**?" (So God has set limits on the how long Satan will have some of his power. The demons are talking about Judgment Day; they know that they are defeated, they know that the abyss is their fate, and that their time is short). **30** Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. **31** The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs." **32** He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. (Notice they had to ask for permission. And so God also sets the parameters of where they are allowed to exercise their power).

And I want to make sure we all understand this. We look at God and Satan as the Warriors vs. the Cavaliers (when Lebron played for the Cavs); 2 sides all knotted up playing for game 7. But that's not what is happening in our world. In reality it's the Warriors playing against a JV High School team. The comparison in power is not even close. And why God chooses to give Satan some power, and make it appear as if Satan is winning we don't know, but that's the beauty of the Book of Revelation, ultimately Satan and the demons, and evil will be destroyed.

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### Will:

Let me double down on this. God and Satan both have control, but the level of control is not even remotely close. But even Jesus refers to Satan as "the ruler or prince of this world" in John 14:30. Jesus refers to the "world" a lot and it usually represents the sinful opposition to God. So Jesus was saying that Satan was the leader of that opposition. So he's got power. We also know

that Satan had no power over Jesus because he was sinless. And the more we align ourselves with God's word and walk in His light, the less power Satan has over us.

Like Art said, God has given Satan a long leash. And when the time is right, God will crush Satan. Where? Underneath His Feet.

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**Art:**

**Why does God allow little children to be abused? Do you think He really controls what happens on earth, or is He hands-off and it's really fate or just life happening. I trust God and I pray and I believe the Bible, but sometimes, it feels as if He's very distant and disinterested in the affairs of this earth.**

To answer this question we have to break "evil," into 2 parts: Natural Evil (Earthquakes, Hurricanes, Tidal Waves, Plagues, etc.) and Moral Evils (when human beings do bad things to other human beings). We know that God does have the power over nature: Jesus calmed the storm in Mark 4, Jesus healed people of diseases, Jesus walked on water, turn water to wine in John 2, etc.

But in the case of Child abuse, this is where moral evil comes into play. We know that in this arena, God gives people freedom to choose, and some of those choices are devastating to the person who does them AND to others around them. We know that God does step in, in some cases: i.e. The Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the 10 plagues in Egypt, Ananias and Sapphira . . . And let's not forget Jesus who steps into our world. But God does not interfere in every case. One person put it like this . . . "In Ezekiel, God notes that each person is responsible for his or her own actions. "But suppose the man has a violent son, who sheds blood and does any of these things, though the father has done none of them... [The son] will not live! Since he has committed all these detestable acts, he will certainly die. His death will be his own fault" (Eze. 18:10-11,13). It is true that God has control over history and the like. But remember, a person is responsible for his or her actions. God's sovereignty does not negate human responsibility. God does not force a person to do anything. His Spirit may woo a person to receive his salvation, but he will not force a person to do so.

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**Will:**

3B It feels as if He's very distant and disinterested in the affairs of this Earth.

Now onto the part about God feeling distant and disinterested. I want you to know this. Acts 17:24-28 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. **25** And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. **26** From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. **27** God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. **28** ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’[a] As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.

I hope you can see that description there. God is close to all of us. While He had created the whole world, He is also close and personal. Creator and Father.

But also know this... Most of us go through a season where we feel further away from God. So you aren't alone. Here is what i would say to help push you through that season of your life. 1: Go back through the Gospel. Refresh yourself on what Jesus did for us. 2: Seek Him. James 4:8a says “Come near to God and He will come near to you.” And then 3: Wait. One of my favorite Psalms is Psalms 40. Listen to what David says in Psalm 40:1-3 “I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in Him. Waiting is the hardest part. But if you keep seeking Him, he will continue to show up. AND He will use your struggle to bring others to Him. Great question. You are not alone.

Why did God create us to be such flawed human beings? I always want to do the right thing but it seems like we were created to fail. I understand that we can never be good enough to get into Heaven but it's hard to really understand why we're here on Earth. It's like we were defeated before we even got here and you can't help but wonder what the purpose is to all this.

He didn't. He did however create us with the ability to serve Him or serve ourselves. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says “**13** No temptation[a] has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted[b] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted,[c] he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” No temptation is too strong for us. Now, we may put ourselves in a situation where its harder to say no. But nobody ever wakes up addicted. Behind a lot of great falls is 100 little bad decisions that we may overlook or excuse.

During the Last Supper, Jesus prays a specific prayer for His disciples. His best friends. John 17:15 “My prayer is not that you take them out of this world but that you protect them from the evil one.” He doesn't pray that they not be tempted, but that they not be defeated by it. Jesus knows that if His disciples beat temptation, they would grow spiritually.

And Jesus also knew that we would fail. But He is able to use that. During the same night, Jesus tells Peter that he is going to mess up. This is one of my favorite verses of all time. Check this out. Luke 22:31-32 **31** “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. **32** But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” Peter is about to make one of the biggest mistakes that he will be known for until the end of time. He will deny Jesus three times. BUT Jesus calls him to regain his faith afterwards and become a leader and strengthen the rest of the disciples. Believe me, Jesus knows what he has to work with. And he still wants to use us for His ministry. So, we weren't created with flaws, we chose that. But he stills uses flawed people for great ministry.

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### **Art:**

What is our purpose? What is the meaning of life? And the answer to that question brings us right back around to the garden and creation. Our Purpose is to Desire God Above Everything. Our Purpose, My purpose is found in Jesus, it's not found in doing or having. We think purpose is found in Doing (My occupation, My Athletics, My Hobbies, My Youtube Channel). Or we think purpose is found in Having (Cars, Houses, a fat 401K, toned beach body). But purpose is NOT found in Doing and Having, purpose is found in Being. . . in being satisfied with God, desiring Him over even ourselves, and from there He will help us figure out the doing and the having **according** to His Will for our lives. And when we get to heaven, we won't care about the Doing or Having, because we will **BE** in His presence.