Series: 6 Most Googled Questions About Christianity (Part 3)
Speaker: Rhordan Wicks

INTRODUCTION

Singapore, 4 May 2023. The main culprit of several wife-sharing rape cases was sentenced. Over a period of eight years, he had sedated his own wife, under the guise of giving her medication, and subjected her to unspeakable acts with strangers. His wife would write in a victim impact statement, "I kept thinking about how cruel he was to do this to me." The couple had four daughters.[1]

Why would God allow such evil to happen? And perhaps in the voice of one of the family, why would God allow such evil to happen *to us*?

We cannot hope to reach a "solution" to the depth and complexity of this set of questions today, or possibly ever. But in Part 3 of this series, we will try to grasp for some handles that the Christian faith offers to make sense of it all.

It starts with the Fall. First of angels, alluded to in Revelation 12:7-9, where Satan rebelled against God and is now active in the world (2 Corinthians 4:4). Second of humanity, as told to us in Genesis 3. When we sin, we rebel against God's ways. God does not enforce obedience

[1]https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/shocking-betrayal-marital-trust-main-culprit-wife-sharing-rape-cases-gets-29-years-jail-caning-2164216

upon us as He wants a relationship with us, and love is only meaningful when we choose to love.

DISCUSSION

1. Share with your group a recent time you had trouble believing in the goodness of God. Was it a recent world event that caused a great deal of pain and suffering? Was it a personal experience, something that you witnessed or that was done to you?

2. Read Genesis 3.

    a. Pay attention to verses 14-24. What was the consequence of human rebellion?

    b. From the passage, where might the evil in our world come from?

3. But if God is good and all-powerful, why did He not prevent evil from happening in the first place? Why does He not stop all evil right now?

    a. Read 2 Peter 3:7-9. Given what we have read, what might our response be to the questions above? What do these verses tell you about who God is?

4. Read John 11:1-44.

    a. In verse 32, Mary deemed Jesus to have arrived late, and was upset by it. But pay attention to verses 5-7. Notice that in many translations, it is implied that Jesus deliberately chose to delay His arrival *because* of His love for Martha, Mary, and Lazarus ("Now… So…"). Why might His delay here have been an act of love?

    b. In verse 35, Jesus wept. Why did He do so?

    c. Taking in the whole story, what do we now know about the character of God? What do we mean when we say that He is good?

5. Read 2 Peter 3:10-13 and Revelation 21:1-4. As Christians, we look forward to the day of the Lord - a new heaven and a new earth.

    a. How will this new heaven and new earth "solve" our problem with evil?

    b. While we wait for the glorious day where God will put everything right, what can/should we do in the meantime?

6. Revisit what was shared for question 1.

    a. What thoughts were going through your mind when you questioned God's goodness?

i. What were you thinking/feeling about God?
ii. Did you trust Him?

b. Given what was shared this session, what would you have told yourself back then?

c. How might you walk alongside others who might be struggling with the same issue?

WHAT WILL YOU DO

The Bible tells us that our God is not oblivious to the pain and suffering that we go through. Jesus, though He was God, allowed himself to be betrayed and humiliated. He suffered and died on the cross for our sake. Sometimes, when we are going through pain and suffering, we may think that we are being punished by God. But this is not true, as we know that He has already taken our punishment on Himself. And as we dwell at the foot of the cross, we discover too a God who has walked in our shoes.

So, what do we do when we experience pain and suffering? Bring and express our grief and frustrations to God. There is no need to act like everything is okay, because He knows that it is not.

After that, let us not remain there but instead draw close to God and worship Him, because He is sovereign and good. In whatever situation that we are going through, let us choose to give thanks and put our trust in God, that He will see us through our pain.

THINK ABOUT IT

For Jesus there were no untested limits. And with trembling in our bones we can voice the sacred truth, that it is… good… that Jesus was so completely tested. For when Jesus screamed, it was, as I said, not in rage, not in anger, but in: a prayer. Although screamed out, the words *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* are a prayer. Jesus feels nothing but abandonment from God, and yet nonetheless he prays to God. He no longer feels any intimacy with God - less than twenty-four hours earlier he was praying to his “Father” that he be spared all this; now he cannot pray to his Father, but he can still pray like any human being can pray, to “God,” to indeed “my God.” He screams, yes, he cries out, yes, but it is a question that he cries, and a question rests upon a relationship, on the reality of one to whom a question is addressed. Jesus goes all the way down to the very bottom of human existence, and even at the bottom, even in the midst of all the pain of the universe, even in the absence of any sign at all that he has a divine Father, even there at the bottom a human being can still pray to God, can still ask, if nothing else, why this God, to whom he is speaking, why this God has forsaken him.

~ Victor Lee Austin, *Losing Susan: Brain Disease, the Priest’s Wife, and the God who Gives and Takes Away* (2016), pp.137-138.

MEMORY VERSE

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

~ Revelation 21: 3-4 (NIV)