

For further thought:

If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world?

- The problem of suffering is one of the hardest questions we face as human beings. It is interesting that the Bible is not scared of the problem. In the Bible, you see people trying to reconcile their knowledge that God is good and is in control of everything with their own experiences of suffering, and succeeding.
- The Bible is very clear that God is both all-loving and all-powerful—that he's completely good and completely in control. So why doesn't he fix things and stop bad things happening?
- It's because God is giving us what we chose. Even though God's original creation was very good (a place of peace, safety and prosperity), human beings rejected his kingship over creation and over us, and so we not only earned ourselves his eternal wrath, we also brought pain and death and suffering into the world.
- Some suffering is just part of life "post-Genesis 3" (like the man born blind in John 9). However, some suffering is the end result of a particular sin (e.g. Romans 1:18-32) and some suffering is the direct judgement of God on sin (e.g. the lame man in John 5:1-14).
- Suffering is not a problem that God looks at from a distance. He doesn't leave us to solve it. Suffering is what God himself did to solve our problem. The cross is where we see that God is all-loving and all-good: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And the cross is where we see that God is all-powerful: what we were powerless to do (i.e. save ourselves from God's wrath—the wrath we deserved), Christ did for us. Jesus secured the victory that offers hope to us all in a new and perfect creation, free from all the ugliness of this world.

Further reading

- Don Carson, *How Long, O Lord?*, 2nd edn, Baker, Grand Rapids, 2006.
- John Dickson, *If I were God, I'd end all the pain*, rev. edn, Matthias Media, Sydney, 2002.
- Paul E. Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith*, rev. edn, IVP, Downers Grove, 2006, chapter 6.
- Kel Richards, *Defending the Gospel*, Matthias Media, Sydney, 2006, chapter 8.