OCTOBER 28, 2025

C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE - BASIC APOLOGETICS COURSE
Small Group Participant Guide

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"This is a journey of faith and reason — learning to know why we believe, defend truth, and share Christ with grace."

SET 2 - Session 2 – The Problem of Evil

Introduction (from CSLI)

Problem of Evil

C.S. Lewis found the problem of evil a stumbling block that initially prevented him from coming to faith. The problem can be stated this way: If God is all powerful, he could eliminate evil; if God is all good, he would eliminate evil; Evil is not eliminated; therefore, there is no such God. Lewis would put this problem to Christians and was unsatisfied by their responses, until he realized a problem with his own view. As an atheist, he did not believe that there was anything really evil (only pain in a world of pain). If there was real evil, he needed a standard (infinite) by which it could be judged. Thus, by considering the nature of evil (and good), he argued himself back to God.

Every worldview must face the problem of evil. Atheism and Pantheism, for example, have a greater problem than Christianity in that they have no basis for objective evil (or good). This lecture deals with various answers to the problem of evil. Is there a contradiction at the heart of Christianity? How can free will, natural law, and soul making show us a way to answer this problem? Once we have the shape of an answer to the intellectual problem of evil, how do we deal with the emotional problem? These central issues are developed in this session

Lecture Synopsis

The lecture addresses the "problem of evil" across intellectual, evidential, and pastoral dimensions, arguing that while suffering poses the strongest challenge to Christian belief, Christianity nonetheless provides resources other worldviews lack. Beginning with C. S. Lewis's personal journey—from atheist objector to thoughtful Christian—the speaker shows how Lewis discovered that recognizing evil actually presupposes an objective moral standard; without such a standard atheistic or New Age frameworks cannot meaningfully call anything truly evil. The lecture then distinguishes three forms of the problem of evil: the **deductive** problem (the alleged logical contradiction between an all-powerful, all-good God and the existence of evil), the **inductive** problem (the evidential challenge posed by the quantity and intensity of suffering), and the **emotional** problem (the raw personal pain that resists intellectual answers).

Philosophically, the lecture surveys key responses. J. L. Mackie's attempted reductio is presented, followed by Alvin Plantinga's influential rebuttal: if it is logically possible that God could permit evil for greater goods—particularly goods that depend on creaturely freedom—then the theistic propositions are consistent. The speaker outlines three classical theodicies that illustrate how permitting evil might serve deeper goods: **free will** (genuine moral freedom entails the possibility of wrongdoing), **natural law** (a regular, law-governed world is necessary for responsibility, growth, and predictable moral action), and **soul-making** (suffering can cultivate virtue, resilience, and maturity). Analogies—privatio boni (evil as a deprivation of good), moth-eaten garments, and the weaver's unseen pattern—help explain how evil can be parasitic on created goods rather than an ontological rival.

Yet the lecture stresses limits: intellectual theodicies rarely console the bereaved. C. S. Lewis's *Grief Observed* is used to demonstrate honest lament—anger, doubt, and gradual restoration—showing that pastoral sensitivity and presence are essential. Practical implications include refusing glib answers, offering accompaniment and lament, and holding theologically to the promise of future renewal (the hope of resurrection). The lecture concludes that while some mysteries remain, Christians can responsibly affirm God's goodness and power without denying the reality of suffering, trusting that permitted evils may serve purposes beyond immediate comprehension.

Ten Life Applications

- **Anchor Faith in Both Head & Heart**
  Strengthen faith by pairing sober intellectual reflection with spiritual practices (study + prayer). This prevents either cold rationalism or ungrounded sentimentality.

  Spend a few minutes this week reading the lecture's recommended short text on theodicy (e.g., Plantinga summary or a C.S. Lewis excerpt), then spend some time in prayer asking God to help you integrate what you learned. Write one paragraph about how the reading changed (or didn't change) your feelings about suffering.

- **Practice Honest Lament**
  Learning to lament gives language for grief and models pastoral presence; it's a faith practice, not a failure of belief.

  Use a journal to write a one-page lament this week about a personal or observed suffering (name the pain, your anger, your questions). Close with a short prayer of lament or a Psalm (e.g., Psalm 13).

- **Memorize & Explain a Short Defense**
  Memorizing one short, clear apologetic point (e.g., the free-will defense or the 1-minute cosmological sketch) increases confidence in conversations.

  Choose one succinct argument from the lecture (free will defense or natural law summary). Memorize a 2–3 sentence version and practice delivering it aloud to a friend or into your phone; record and listen to yourself once. Note one improvement and try again.

- **Create a Personal "Theodicy Outline"**
  Building a one-page outline of how you personally reconcile suffering and faith helps you articulate a humble, credible response.

  Draft a single page: (A) honest admission of mystery, (B) the explanatory tools you rely on (free will, natural law, soul-making), (C) pastoral practices you commit to (presence, lament), and (D) one verse that grounds your hope.

- **Gather & Share a Testimony of Transformation**
  Stories of God's comfort or growth in suffering are persuasive; practicing testimony helps you articulate gospel truth in pastoral, concrete ways.

  Reflect on and write a 3–5 minute testimony where suffering led to growth or greater reliance on God. Practice it and then share it with one trusted person this week, asking for feedback on clarity and pastoral tone.

- **Study a Case-Study (Historical & Pastoral)**
  Reading a short historical or pastoral case (e.g., Lewis's A Grief Observed or a modern grief account) helps combine reasoned reflection with pastoral empathy.

  Read one short chapter or article. Note three insights about how the author handled doubt and grief, and write out a summary in your personal notes.

- **Practice Compassionate Listening**
  Strengthen your pastoral presence by learning to listen without immediately offering theological fixes — a key skill when engaging those in pain.

  Arrange a 30-minute conversation with someone willing to talk about a struggle; practice 20 minutes of active listening (no solutions), then 10 minutes reflecting back what you heard and offering a simple prayer.

- **Apply Resurrection Hope Practically**
  Let the doctrine of bodily resurrection motivate concrete acts of care and justice in the present world (embodied hope).

  Identify one concrete local need (meals program, shelter, advocacy). If not already, volunteer for a single shift or commit to a one-time act this month; afterward, journal how the action connected to the hope of renewal.

- **Build a Short Q&A Cheat-Sheet**
  Having 3–4 brief answers ready for common skeptical questions about suffering increases confidence in brief conversations.

  Create a one-page cheat-sheet with: (a) a 1-sentence honest opener ("I don't pretend to have all the answers..."), (b) a 2-sentence explanatory point (free will/natural law/soul-making), and (c) a 1-sentence pastoral offer (listen, help, pray). Memorize and test it in a role-play if possible.

- **Form a Mini "Care & Discussion" Action Plan**
  Integrate theology and practice by mapping how you and your group will support those who suffer (practical care + reflection).

  With one or two others, draft a one-page plan: names to keep contact with, practical help (meals, rides), spiritual resources (scriptures, prayers), and a timeline for follow-up. Put steps on the calendar and commit to one concrete action in the next two weeks.

Study Questions (from CSLI)

1. Why does every worldview have a problem of evil?

2. Why do some worldviews have a more difficult problem than Christianity?

3. What is the deductive problem of evi?

4. How can the charge of contradiction (in the theistic set) be answered once and for all?

5. How can the inductive problem of evil (the amount of evil) be addressed?

6. How do free will, natural law, and soul making factor into this issue?

7. Once the shape of an intellectual answer is given, how can we deal with the emotional factors? How can Lewis's A Grief Observed be a guide?

Building Faith Conversations

1. How does C. S. Lewis's own journey from atheism to faith illustrate the interplay between intellectual reasoning and personal suffering in coming to belief?

2. What does the idea of **privatio boni** (evil as a lack or corruption of good) change about how we talk about evil's origin and nature?

3. How does Plantinga's **Free Will Defense** function differently from a full theodicy, and what limits should we acknowledge for each?

4. How can the notion of **natural law** account for impersonal suffering (earthquakes, disease) without making God morally responsible for those events?

5. In what ways might "soul-making" explanations be misapplied to justify apparently gratuitous suffering, and how do we guard against that misuse?

6. Practically, how should pastors and leaders balance offering theological explanation with providing space for lament, anger, and honest questioning?

7. What long-term pastoral practices (not quick answers) can a church adopt to accompany people through chronic suffering or traumatic loss?

8. How does belief in a future bodily resurrection shape Christian responses to social injustice and motivate concrete work for restoration and repair?

9. How can we communicate the humility and mystery of “permitted evil” to skeptics in a way that neither trivializes suffering nor abandons reasoned defense?

10. What ethical responsibilities do Christians have when using theodicies in public conversation—especially in pluralistic settings where others hold different religious or nonreligious outlooks?

Links to Lectures and Notes: https://srmatthews.com/tsg

Set 2 - Lecture 2 with Timestamps

(0:20 - 1:41) Today, we're going to be dealing with the problem of evil. It's one of the great problems of people with respect to faith in Christ. Many atheists have pointed out that it's a great obstacle.

C.S. Lewis, as we'll see, pointed out that it was a great obstacle for him. Just saw a recent tape where atheists describe in detail, almost ad nauseum, the kinds of evils that are in the world. Richard Dawkins does the same.

I heard him one time in a discussion with Alistair McGrath do the same. So it's an important topic for us to address at the very root. But we may find some surprising conclusions as we do so.

Let's start out with a word of prayer and we'll offer this time to the Lord. Lord Jesus, we pray for your presence in this time. We pray that as we come to this difficult problem of the problem of evil and pain and suffering, that you might give us clarity, that you might give us insight.

I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts might be acceptable to you. Oh, Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

(1:42 - 8:13) Well, I have a particular problem here as I speak about these things, and it's one that C.S. Lewis mentioned, and I'm particularly aware of it as I speak to you about this subject. He says in Problem of Pains, Lewis does, that all argument and justification of suffering provokes bitter resentment against the author. And I think that that's true with regard to the speaker.

There's an immediate skepticism about your being able to explain it or explain it away. I know with Lewis, that was his immediate attitude for quite a while. He was an atheist and he used to raise the problem of evil that we're going to try to lay out more fully, and wouldn't really listen to Christian responses to the subject. That was until he realized that there was a great problem that he had as an atheist, because as an atheist, he just believed that we live in a world where there's pain in a world of pain, and there's no objective good or objective evil. And in order for his argument to have any strong sense, he had to really maintain that there was

evil in the world, and that was inconsistent with an all-good, all-powerful God. But the problem, as he realized, was that his idea of evil was just his own personal preference or his own personal taste.

It was the way he felt about things, not necessarily the way things were with regard to his whole atheist perspective. And that became a problem. He started to see if there was evil in the world, then there must be some objective standard by which he knew there was evil, and that must mean that there's an objective standard of good, and that's not far away from the idea of God.

So in many ways, he argued himself, he argued his way to God's existence from the reality and existence of evil itself, which is very interesting, and brings us to our first major point, which is every worldview has a problem of evil. We're going to be addressing, particularly in this time, the problem of evil that believers have, believers in Christ. But every worldview has a problem of evil, and other worldviews have a greater problem of evil than we do, as I illustrated, perhaps, with regard to C.S. Lewis.

In atheism, there is no objective basis for evil at all, and that's a great problem because I think that we know deep down that there is such a thing as evil. G.K. Chesterton said, we've given up the idea of original sin when it's the only doctrine of Christianity that can be empirically proven. You just open up your eyes and you can look at the world.

I know I've had a number of people that actually came to Christ on the basis of that, really seeing that there was evil, Lewis included. Also, with regard to the New Age movement or Eastern religious perspective, we talked about this with respect to the New Age movement. If you want to go back to that, those lectures, and look at the quotes that were given, you'll see that people from Hindu-Buddhist-Neo-Pagan perspective don't believe that there is anything such as objective good and objective evil.

This is not surprising because you have, in that philosophy, all is one. Or to put it in the negative way, the principle of non-distinction, that there are no distinctions in the world between, say, you and me, between me and this podium, between true and false, between good and evil. And you have multiple statements by advocates of Hinduism, Buddhism, and New Age and Eastern perspectives that underline this idea that there is no such thing as good or evil. But of course, if there is, and that worldview has no basis to explain it, that becomes a major problem. There's a couple I know that go to Fourth Presbyterian Church that were into the New Age movement, and one thing really caused them to think. There was an accident that happened over in Falls Church at an intersection.

There was a family on the way to church on Sunday morning, and a man was coming the other direction and ran a stoplight being chased by the police and smashed into the car, and the whole family was killed. And they started to think about this, and they said, you know, this is evil. And yet, they realized within their perspective, they had to deny that there was any such thing.

So it caused a crisis of confidence in their own worldview and led them to explore faith in Christ. And now they're very strong believers. But in some ways, the problem of evil actually caused them to think about the biblical perspective, because within atheism and the New Age, I would argue, there's no basis to explain or justify the fact that there's any objective evil or good.

In a previous talk, we looked at the idea of truth, and you might remember the argument there. Unless God exists, there is no objective evil or good. There is objective evil and good.

Therefore, God exists. We're not going to go back and go over that in detail right now. You can go back to a previous talk and examine it. But this problem of evil is a greater problem, I would suggest, for other worldviews than for believers. In fact, if there is evil in the world, then atheism, postmodernism, Hinduism, Buddhism, neo-paganism are all false because they have no basis to explain objective evil. If there is no evil, if there is no objective evil, then Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are all false. But you can't have both. They're mutually contradictory with respect to their views of the idea of evil. On the one hand, you have a basis for objective evil.

(8:13 - 10:11) On the other hand, you don't. You don't have a basis to explain it or no place to regard it as real. So there's a major problem in the atheist perspective with regard to this idea.

In many ways, as it was for Lewis, it's a kind of backdoor argument towards God's existence. But atheists have come along, and many others, and charged that there is a great problem of evil with regard to faith in Christ. And they've charged it on many different levels.

I'm going to look at both the deductive problem, the charge that atheists make that there is actually a contradiction at the heart of Christianity with the idea that you have an all-powerful, all-good God, and that there's evil in the world. That's the strong charge, that there's actually a contradiction. It's called the deductive problem. Then you have the inductive problem, which says not so much that there's a logical contradiction, but the amount of evil that's present in the world is inconsistent with an all-good, all-powerful God. That's the inductive problem. And we're going to look at both of those for a little bit right now, and then we're going to come back and look at the emotional problem of evil, which is something that even once you have an intellectual framework by which you can explain the existence of evil or the place of evil in the world, you still have to deal with the emotional struggles that come when you actually encounter it.

And we'll use Lewis as an example. Let's go back to the deductive problem, the charge that there is a contradiction at the heart of Christianity on the problem of evil. There are several statements that belief in Christ entails.

First of all, that God is all-powerful. He could eliminate evil. God is all-good. He would eliminate evil. Evil exists, or evil is not eliminated, therefore there is no such God. Now, that's the way the atheist argument would run.

(10:11 - 11:25) Now, some people have argued that more than that just being a problem, that there's actually a contradiction somehow at the heart of these ideas that Christianity entails. I'm going to use a fancy term here which, if it's not helpful, you can disregard it, but there's a whole, there's several propositions or ideas to which Christianity is committed. All these are part of classical Christianity, that God is all-powerful, that God is all-good, that evil exists.

You could regard that as the theistic set of ideas. These are sets of ideas that Christianity entails or that are part of the essential trappings of belief of Orthodox Christianity. So the question is, to put it more succinctly, is there a contradiction in the theistic set of ideas that are present? Now, where would there be an explicit contradiction between these ideas? Now, if you said that God is all-powerful and God is not all-powerful, that would be a contradiction.

If you were to say that God is all-good and God is not all-good, that would be a contradiction. If you were to say evil exists and evil doesn't exist, that would be a contradiction. That would be very explicit.

(11:26 - 12:03) But the idea that these propositions are there, there's no necessary explicit contradiction on the surface of these ideas. But where is the contradiction if there is one? Atheists have sometimes charged that there is an implicit contradiction, an attempt to supply a missing premise that is entailed by these ideas that would show it to be contradictory. For instance, J.L. Mackie, who was an atheist, attempted to provide such a missing premise, and he said this.

(12:04 - 12:50) Here's his missing premise by which he hopes to show that there's a contradiction in this theistic set of ideas. He said, God is opposed to evil in such a way that a being whose wholly good eliminates evil as far as he can, and that there are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do, then we have a contradiction. Let me read that one more time.

God is opposed to evil in such a way that a being whose wholly good eliminates evil as far as he can, and that there are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do, then we have a contradiction. Well, I would say there are a couple problems in the way that he sets out this missing premise. The first one is towards the end of the statement that there are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do.

(12:51 - 14:24) I would say there are limits to what an omnipotent being can do. It shouldn't be said that God can do anything. God cannot do, I believe, the illogical or contradictory, such as, for instance, square the circle. He cannot do the impossible or the immoral. God cannot die or God cannot lie. He cannot also do certain pseudo tasks, such as, for instance, building a rock so big that he can't move it.

I mean, that's the classic idea that you get in freshman philosophy. Can God build a rock so big that he can't move it? If God can build a rock so big he can't move it, then it's something he can't do. If he can't build a rock so big he can't move it, there's something he can't do. So either way, you have a dilemma. What's the answer to the pseudo dilemma? I would say, no, God cannot build a rock so big he can't move it. He can't do such pseudo tasks.

The idea of God's omnipotence is that he's all-powerful over his creation. There are certain things that God cannot do, and this is not just my invention. This has been held right throughout the history of orthodoxy. It's gone back to Aquinas and a whole lot further back in church history. But really, this idea that there are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do is not the primary issue that I want to take on here. It's the other part of Mackey's premise that God is opposed to evil in such a way that a being whose holy good eliminates evil as far as he can.

(14:26 - 17:54) And perhaps the rest of what we say in the intellectual side of this discussion will be addressing this. And here's a question that might be asked about as far as he can. I'd say as far as he can is ambiguous.

What if eliminating all evil or the possibility of evil led to greater evils or loss of greater goods? What if eliminating all evil led to greater evils or the loss of greater goods? That's what we're going to explore during the rest of this time. But let me just step back and just deal with the logical side for just a second. I would say that the set of propositions that are involved in Christianity, the theistic set as we've defined it, that God is all powerful, God is all good, and there's evil in the world, real evil, can once and for all shown to be consistent.

Alvin Plantinga has written in his book God, Freedom, and Evil and demonstrated forever the consistency of the theistic set. And here's the way that he did it. He would say an omnibenevolent, omnipotent God created the world.

All good, all powerful God created the world. God creates a world where evil is permitted and has a good reason for doing so. Therefore, the world contains evil. All right, now it's that second premise that's interesting. God creates a world where evil is permitted and has a good reason for doing so. Now, if that premise is merely logically possible, then you never can again charge a contradiction in the theistic set.

Again, if that premise, God creates a world where evil is permitted and has a good reason for doing so, is merely logically possible, then there's never a necessary contradiction in the theistic set of ideas. All right, now I think there's nothing logically impossible about the statement. There's nothing on the surface that's contradictory.

The only thing you might ask is, and has a good reason for doing so, what is the reason or reasons that might be put forth? And we're going to talk about some of those in a little bit. But even if it's possible, and even if we don't fully know what it is, then there's no necessary contradiction. And Plantinga actually cautions in God, Freedom, and Evil that it might be unwise, as we're going to do a little bit, to actually unpack the ideas for why God might have a reason for permitting evil to be in the world.

Because it could be that we do a rather lame job in the process of explaining things, the process of what's called theodicy or justifying God. It could be we do rather poor, make a rather poor attempt in laying forth the reasons that are there. It could be, I remember I had a professor, and in the midst of lectures sometimes we'd have long discussions and dialogues, and often we'd raise an objection and he would say, no, no, no, that will never do.

(17:55 - 18:09) And it could be that God will look down on our theodicy, our justification of God, our reasons, for which God may permit evil. You totally miss it. No, no, no, that will never do.

(18:10 - 18:27) It could be that God will respond to our attempts in that way, so that the danger is in coming up with our reasons and trying to, say, put them forth to a non-believer. It could be they'll look at it and say, no, no, no, that will never do. And maybe God is up there saying the same.

(18:28 - 18:59) So that I am going to try to put forth some reasons, and perhaps I'm unwise in doing so, but it's at least valuable to say what are some of the reasons that believers have suggested throughout the ages. But in any case, to come back to it, that if God creates a world where evil is permitted and has a good reason for doing so, forever the theistic set is shown to be consistent. Again, you can never charge a necessary contradiction in the theistic set.

(18:59 - 20:20) Plantinga has done a great service for us. You can never again charge this logical contradiction. Towards the end of his life, J.L. Mackey, this atheist who tried to argue that there is a missing premise, admitted that he couldn't show a necessary contradiction, especially in light of Plantinga's response to it.

One other comment about this, resolving the contradiction, or charge of contradiction, is this. You could perhaps even add a word to this classic problem where you say that God is all-powerful, God is all-good. Maybe just add a word here. Evil is not yet eliminated. Therefore, God will eliminate evil. There is no such God. So it could be that teleologically, in the end, you'll see a resolution for these things. Also, I want to just raise another issue that has been classically held. I would say, first of all, God did not create evil.

(20:20 - 25:52) In fact, I would argue that there's nothing intrinsically evil. Throughout history, you have the idea of dualism, where you have an all-good God and an all-evil God that are there, and you can have

intrinsically evil substances or essences that are there in the world. But within Christianity, everything that's created is good.

What then is evil? Augustine defined evil as a privatio bonae, a privation of the good. Evil is parasitic upon the good. You could have good without evil, but you could not have evil without good. Evil exists as a or as a distortion of that which is good, a misuse of that which is good. Like, we could take our bodies and be sexually involved. Now, there is a divinely intended use for our sexuality which would be totally consistent with thy will be done.

You could also say, in terms of the use of our bodies, there's a divinely prohibited sense in which we could use our bodies sexually, and that's my will be done. So we're using the same good essence of our bodies in the course of evil, outside the divine boundaries, or in the service of God. We can either say my will be done or thy will be done. And I would say that in all cases of evil, it's a privation of that which is good. Norman Geisel uses a few analogies, and no analogy is sufficient to incorporate all these ideas. But for instance, he'll say, okay, you can think of a moth-eaten garment.

What is a totally moth-eaten garment? Nothing. Now, you can think of a rust on a car, but what is a totally rusted car? Nothing. Blindness, for instance, is the absence of a good which is sight, and so on and so on. Or again, the idea of the misdirection of the use of good, our good capacities for the sake of evil, in rebellion to God. I would even suggest that Satan's essence or substance is not intrinsically evil. Satan is a created angel, and the angelic nature, whatever it is, is good. And Satan certainly rebels in opposition to God. He's a great adversary. But there's nothing essentially evil about Satan's being, or even demonic being.

Everything that's created is good, but evil misuses that which is good, or distorts it, or goes along the analogies that I've just given. Another thing that some people have raised is this. Norman Geisler has said something like this, that this may not be the best of all possible worlds. I think you could perhaps argue with Leibniz and others that this may be the best of all possible worlds, but I'm not going to try to argue that here. This may not be the best of all possible worlds, but it is, Geisler says, the best of all possible ways to the best of all possible worlds. So I'm going to at least throw that out as another way, but not yet eliminated, with which we can at least get a perspective on this issue of evil.

There may be an end for which God permitted evil to be in the world. God didn't create evil because there's no such thing as intrinsic evil. God did create us with a capacity to do evil. Now that capacity to choose evil is not evil itself. Human beings chose evil. There's, in that choice, we'll talk about in a little bit, which is with respect to free will, that free will is held in both Reformed and Arminian perspectives.

All classical believers address an idea of free will, although there's sometimes different ideas philosophically about what free will involves. But, so that God created the capacity for people to choose evil, but that's not evil itself. But why did God create people with a possibility to do evil, and knowing that they would choose evil? Well, this is where the best of all possible ways to the best of all possible worlds. Maybe there are greater goods or lesser evils that are created by permitting evil to be present. That's at least the beginnings of the answer. And we're going to touch on a little bit further that in terms of the inductive problem.

What are some of these greater evils or lesser goods? Now, this is where I'm out on a limb a little bit and doing that which I said and that which Plano advises I ought not to try to do. But some of the classical lines along which people have suggested we can go is free will, natural law, and soul making. These are the three main areas.

(25:53 - 27:06) Free will, natural law, and soul making. Free will is the classical instance that God, it's much better that there is freedom of the will than not. And again, this is held by not only Arminians, say from Wesleyan background, but also held by the Reformed contingent.

Like in the Westminster Confession, it says, why is there evil in the world? The answer is a man by the freedom of his will sinned. Well, we're not going to go further here and try to amplify various views of free will that are held out there. And there are lots of philosophical ways we can articulate that. But in essence, this has been something that's been appealed to. It's better that there is free will than not. Second main idea is the idea of natural law.

Now, God, you know, if he is creating in nature, here's what Lewis says in Problem of Pain. It says, as soon as we attempt to introduce the mutual knowledge of fellow creatures, we run up against the necessity of nature. Now, people often talk as if nothing were easier than for two naked minds to meet.

(27:06 - 28:32) Or become aware of one another. But I see no possibility of their doing so, except in a common medium, which forms their external world or environment. But you might say something like this, couldn't God constantly intervene every time there's potential for evil to happen in people's lives? Well, that would create some problems.

Here's what author F.R. Tennant had to say along these lines. He said, it cannot be too strongly insisted that a world which is to be a moral order must be a physical order characterized by law and regularity. The theist is only concerned to invoke the fact that law abidingness is an essential condition of the world being a theater of moral life. Without such regularity and physical phenomena, there could be no probability to guide us. No prediction, no prudence, no accumulation of ordered experience, no pursuit of premeditated ends, no formation of habit, no possibility of character or culture. Our intellectual faculties could not have been developed. And without rationality, morality is impossible. So if there was not a consistency in the moral order, if God were to constantly intervene, there'd be no responsibility. And thus, no accumulation of experience, no prediction, no prudence, no possibility of character or culture.

(28:35 - 31:46) C.S. Lewis responded to this. God could constantly intervene so the wooden beam became as soft as grass when it was used as a weapon. And the air refused to obey me if I attempted to set up in it the sound waves that carry lies or insults. But such a world would be one in which wrong actions were impossible. Say, to use another illustration, he could, every time a bullet is shot, turn it into a marshmallow. But then there would be no responsibility and no consequences, no serious consequences for the choices we make. And would that be a better world? At least I'll leave that for you to consider. Or we might say, could not have God created another nature? But we are in problems when we try to conceive of such a nature. Think of various things like fire. Earth, air, fire, and water were the four basic things that the Greeks thought of. We'll just take fire. Fire is good. It's good to be around a campfire and roast marshmallows. Fire can be used for cooking. But fire can also destroy. It can burn people or burn possessions, burn houses. You look, think of water. Water is a good thing.

We have lakes where people water ski and jet ski and have all kinds of fun. Water is great to drink or we have a swimming pool in which we can swim. But water can also become a tsunami or water can also drown. So you have that which is good and you might regard as essential, fire and water, but it has great possibility of harm. Air, we need air to breathe. But air, when it becomes a hurricane or a tornado, it has great destructive effect.

So that it seems that there are lots of things in the world that are good that also have the possibility for destruction or harm towards us. So there's at least a problem when you think about God creating another nature. A third area, free will, natural law, third area is soul making.

Paul Tournier has a great book. He's a Christian doctor that wrote a book called Creative Suffering. And in that book, he analyzes some of the great leaders throughout history. And he points out that all great leaders have had to go through times of difficulty and suffering. In many ways, if you haven't had to go through times of difficulty and suffering, there's often not that quality of greatness. People that are great have often had to face great obstacles and overcome it and come out stronger on the other side. So they have a capacity to address great problems and resistance. They have real conviction that's been tested through fire. They've come out on the other side through real pain and suffering.

(31:48 - 32:01) So that there's a sense of what suffering has a kind of creative power sometimes in people's lives. But suffering can also crush people depending on how you respond to it. It lead people to despair.

(32:02 - 40:52) So you have when you face suffering the capacity for real gain and creativity to come out of it and real greatness and real loss in how you address that suffering and how you move forward through it or not. In many ways, pain in this world serves the function of waking us up. Pain shatters illusion.

This is what CS Lewis says in Problem of Pain. It says, but pain insists on being attended to. God whispers in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It's his megaphone to rouse a deaf world. It plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul. It shatters the illusion that what we have, whether good or bad in itself, is our own and enough for us. And that's a famous quote of Lewis. God whispers in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain. The sense in which it wakes us up to see the nature of the real world.

We can live in a kind of illusory world, have our thoughts about the way the world really is, but pain wakes you up, helps you to see with more clarity the world as it is. Perhaps you see yourself as you are. Augustine says about pain that God wants to give us something but cannot because our hands are full.

There's nowhere for him to put it. In any case, as Lewis describes it in Problem of Pain, there is this veil of soul making where there is real gain and real loss. So I haven't fully developed any one of these areas.

You can find whole books that will do so, but these are some of the lines along which people have suggested the reason that God has permitted evil to be in the world is free will, natural law, soul making. I think perhaps also you can see that there's the glory of God at stake somehow. You can also see some hints in scripture, like in Colossians chapter 1, that this whole world was created in, through, by, and for Christ.

You see something of the glory of Christ revealed through this whole process of redemption, creation, fall, redemption, consummation. Or in Romans 8, 29 and 30, it says, for whom God foreknew, he predestined that he might become the firstborn among many brethren. And whom he foreknew, he predestined. Whom he predestined, he called. Whom he called, he justified. Whom he justified, he glorified. But it's particularly that this whole process of foreknowledge and predestination is that Christ might be the firstborn, that he might be seen to be preeminent. In any case, these are a couple hints within scripture of the directions that we could pursue further. But even once you address this intellectual problem of evil, and again, I think I've pointed to where you can find a decisive refutation of the deductive problem, you still have the emotional problem of evil.

And C.S. Lewis realized this. In fact, when he, in the very beginning, in the preface to Problem of Pain, he pointed out that even though he was giving an intellectual framework for it, that he didn't know that when he had to encounter pain himself, whether he would have the courage to be able to address it. So he admitted that right up front, that to have the intellectual framework doesn't necessarily mean you have fortitude by which you can face this issue of evil.

And when he actually did encounter, later in his life, and perhaps you know the story, that death of his wife Joy from cancer, he was thrown into a real tailspin. Quite late in life, in his 60s, he got married, and he really got married to Joy before the church, when she was on her deathbed, it seemed, from cancer in the hospital. And the priest that was there that married them put his hands on Joy and prayed for her and anointed her with oil, and she was expected to last only about a couple weeks, a week or two.

And she had a miraculous recovery, at least for a period, a remission, you might call it. And she was able within a couple weeks, rather than dying, to actually get out of the hospital in a wheelchair and get up to almost normal walking with a cane. And during those three years before she did die and the cancer came back, they had the joys in later life that many people have in their 20s, of incredible marriage, and it was a tremendous thing. But then the cancer came back with a vengeance, and after all the joy he'd had in those three years, he lost Joy. And again, that sent C.S. Lewis into a tailspin, and he had great grief because of what he had lost. And he decided to keep his thoughts in a journal, just for himself.

And he had a friend come by to visit him, Roger Green, and Roger asked C.S. Lewis if he could read that journal. And he took the journal, and he read it, and he said, you know, I think that this would be very valuable for other people to read, some of the thoughts you have. So he decided to submit it to a publisher anonymously, under a pseudonym, N.W. Clerk, which is an old English allusion to I Know Not What Scholar.

In any case, it was a pseudonym, although, interestingly, one of the people on the committee to review the book was T.S. Eliot, and he said, that's C.S. Lewis. Although they never did make that public. So the book, Grief Observed, was published, again, first under N.W. Clerk, and I've even heard that C.S. Lewis actually received some gift copies to help him recover in his grief.

So that's kind of ironic. In any case, in Grief Observed, you see in the beginning part of the book, the real struggle. He went through what Saint John of the Cross talks about as the dark night of the soul. There are times where God may seem very distant or absent. It's like when you shoot the arrows of prayer up into heaven, they bounce back. The heavens are as brass. You know, you can't get through. And he was going through that period. And when you read the first part of Grief Observed, there's some rather awful thoughts that he was thinking.

Again, he didn't write the book for public consumption. He just wrote it for his own meditation. But when I first read the beginning of Grief Observed, after the first maybe 10, 20 pages, I stopped because the thoughts were so awful. I couldn't believe believers saying those things. But it's been very helpful, actually, to many people to see someone like C.S. Lewis struggling and thinking awful thoughts. Because often we do when we go through suffering and difficulty. But it's the kind of book that you don't just stop in the first part of the book. You have to go on because there's a gradual lifting of the cloud and a resolution towards the end. So it's the kind of book you need to go on and finish.

But in any case, during that dark night of the soul, when there was this distance from God, Lewis said this in Grief Observed, but go to him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face and the sound of bolting and double bolting. Even more, it was a doubt, a doubt

not so much that God didn't exist, but a doubt that God was good. The real danger, he said, is of coming to believe such dreadful things about him.

(40:52 - 41:24) The conclusion, I dread, is not so there's no God after all, but so this is what God is really like. Deceive yourself no longer. In fact, he had some awful thoughts that came into his mind.

Again, not written originally for public consumption, but that God was a cosmic sadist or vivisectionist or something like that. Pretty awful thoughts of God. But as he was thinking these awful thoughts, he reflected on it and he said in some ways he actually liked thinking these thoughts.

(41:25 - 41:37) And the question is, why did he like thinking these thoughts? And here's what he reflected. In a way, he said, I like them. I'm even aware of a slight reluctance to accept opposite thoughts.

(41:38 - 42:31) All that stuff about the cosmic sadist was not so much the expression of thought as of hatred. I was getting from it the only pleasure a man in anguish can get, the pleasure of hitting back, telling God what I thought of him. And of course, as in all abusive language, what I thought didn't mean what I thought true.

Only what I thought would offend him, God, and his worshipers most. That sort of thing is never said without some pleasure. Gets it off your chest. You'll feel better for a moment. I've seen in my own interaction and heard stories of a number of atheists that rage against God. And you get the idea sometimes when you think about them, it's not so much that they don't believe God exists, although they say so, but they're angry with him.

(42:32 - 44:31) Sometimes you think the idea from Shakespeare, methinks thou dost protest too much. You think there's something that they really do believe God exists deep down, and they get this pleasure from lashing out at him in the way that C.S. Lewis speaks about here. If you get well into Grief Observing, it's not a very long book. You could read it actually quite quickly. The clouds began to lift. He said, I never raised the question of whether a return of joy back to this life rather than dying, if it were possible, would be good for her.

I want her back as an ingredient of my past. Could I have wished her anything worse? Having got once through death to come back and then at some later date have all her dying to do all over again. They call Stephen the first martyr.

Hadn't Lazarus the raw ordeal? Lazarus was brought back to life from the dead after being four days in the grave. But then, of course, he had to die all over again. And who knows whether the second death might have been worse than the first.

In fact, Lewis had that experience when he was, it seemed, on his deathbed. He slipped into a coma and people thought perhaps he would never wake and he would die in that coma. And then one morning he woke up and he asked for a cup of tea. But then he expressed regret that he, like Lazarus, had his dying to do all over again. And who knows what it would be like. Would have been nice to just slip into that coma rather than anticipate what might happen in the future.

In any case, one day, he said, his heart felt lighter. Perhaps it was due to the fact that he'd had a few good nights sleep. But in any case, he said, it came this morning.

(44:31 - 45:37) My heart was lighter than it had been for many weeks. He reflects that the door was no longer bolted and double-bolted. He says, was it my own frantic need that slammed it in my face? The time when there's nothing at all in your soul except a cry for help may be just the time when God cannot give it.

You're like a drowning man who cannot be helped because he clutches or grabs. Perhaps your own reiterated cries deafen you to the voice you hope to hear. So that no longer were the heavens as brass.

It was a sense of the openness to God. It wasn't an abrupt change. It was happening gradually.

And again, Lewis uses the great pictures and illustrations to illustrate it. He said, it was like the warming of a room or the coming of daylight. When you first notice them, they've already been going on for some time.

(45:37 - 47:35) Isn't that great? The warming of a room or air conditioning of a room or whatever, the coming of daylight. When you first notice them, they've already been going on for some time. He started to realize that perhaps his answers to the question were, even though they may have been forthcoming in some ways, I mean, he had the intellectual framework in Problem of Pain, but even some of the questions he was asking didn't have a clear answer.

Perhaps God had an answer and he didn't know what it was, but perhaps even some of the questions he was answering or he was asking were unanswerable by God himself. Here's what he puts forward. It says, when I lay these questions before God, I get no answer, but a rather special sort of no answer.

It's not the locked door. It's more like a silent, certainly not uncompassionate gaze, as though he shook his head, not in refusal, but waving the question, like peace child, you don't understand, or my comment, no, no, no, that will never do. Can a mortal ask questions which God finds unanswerable? Quite easily, I should think.

All nonsense questions are unanswerable. For instance, he said, how many hours are there in a mile? Is yellow square or round? Probably half the questions we ask, half of our great theological and metaphysical problems are like that. My son was just reading from Calvin's Institutes and with regard to one theological issue, but we could probably also say with this, it's like a labyrinth.

(47:37 - 47:50) It's like a labyrinth where we are wandering in a maze and can't quite find our way out. That doesn't mean that there's not a way out. It's just we don't quite know what the way is.

(47:52 - 50:33) So this problem of evil is one where we can at least put to rest the deductive problem, and we can at least suggest some lines along which the inductive problem can be addressed. We can at least provide some framework for the emotional problem, although some people come through the emotional problem, as Lewis did, stronger. He certainly wrote Grief Observed, where you see a resolution in the end.

You also see one of the later books he wrote before he died, Letters to Malcolm, chiefly on prayer, to show that his faith was restored and all its robust fullness. He didn't seriously doubt God, as sometimes it's portrayed in, say, the Hollywood version of Shadowlands particularly. In the BBC version of Shadowlands, there's a little bit more of the resolution indicated, but it's not quite so clear in the Hollywood version of Shadowlands.

But in any case, there is at least some of that resolution that's there. Corrie Ten Boom, who some of you may know of, was in a Nazi concentration camp, and she lost her father and her sister there, and she struggled deeply with the suffering that she'd been through, and she came through much stronger, was able to preach

even the love of God in the midst of suffering. And she often used to quote this poem, it's called The Weaver, by a guy, I think it's Grant Colfax Tuller.

In any case, here's a couple sections from this poem, it's called The Weaver. Does my life is but a weaving between my Lord and me. I cannot choose the colors.

He worketh steadily. Oft times he weaveth sorrow, and I in foolish pride. Forget he sees the upper, and I the underside.

Not till the looms are silent, and the shuttles cease to fly, will God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why. The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skillful hand, as threads of gold and silver in the pattern he has planned. We see the bottom part of the rug where all the threads and the pieces of rug are below, but we don't see the pattern often.

(50:34 - 51:34) Only God sees the upper side, the picture, the beautiful pattern, or the pattern that's there on the rug. And so there's a difference of perspective. We don't see the purpose for which these things happen, and sometimes we can't know.

There are some issues of suffering that we can't even conceive what the purpose of God permitting these things might be. But in any case, we can put our trust in the God who knows why. We may not know why, as Job never did know why in his own lifetime, it seems.

At least in the book of Job, he never did find out why he was undergoing suffering. You have at the beginning of the book, we know why. It's kind of like Columbo.

We know whodunit in the beginning, but Job never does find out why. He just has to, he asks his questions and God just gives him questions. God doesn't give him answers.

(51:35 - 52:03) And often we can be like that. Sometimes we can suggest possible answers, and sometimes we can see down the road the reason why certain things that God has permitted in our lives, perhaps why they happen, and perhaps see why it was good for us. Other things we have no clue.

But there are times where we may not know why, but we need to trust in the God who knows why. We'll stop at that point.

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