

# Good and Evil

## CHRISTIAN BELIEFS ABOUT GOOD AND EVIL – God and the Devil

**Key ideas:** God is more powerful than the Devil, so good is stronger than evil. God created people with free will to allow them to choose for themselves and consider consequences.

- Christianity teaches that God is perfect and the source of all goodness. He is the beginning of everything and everything which God created is good.
- **Some** Christians say that if there is evil in the world, then there must also be a power of evil as well as good. This power is known as the Devil and as a force of evil; the Devil desires to work against God and tempt humans to act in an evil way.
- Not all Christians believe that the Devil is a real being and that the Devil is just a symbolic way of showing how people struggle between the choice to do good or be tempted to do evil. Humans make this choice by using their **free will** which they were created with. Eg. Mother Teresa chose to be good and help the unloved, while Hitler chose to be evil and commit acts of genocide.
- The story of the Devil as a fallen angel is not found in the Bible, but in the Jewish and Christian writings of the Apocrypha.
- There are few references to the Devil in the Bible.
  - The Devil appears as a serpent in Genesis 3 where he convinces Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil – thereby disobeying God.
  - In the story of Job where he suggests to God that Job is only obedient to him because he is protected so well by God. God therefore allows the Devil to bring all kinds of suffering upon Job to demonstrate that Job will remain faithful to God, which he does.
  - The Devil appears to tempt Jesus in the wilderness offering food and wealth + power, but Jesus remains faithful.

### Quotations

*“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”* Genesis 1:31

*“Your enemy the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”* 1 Peter 5:8

## THE FALL, ORIGINAL SIN AND REDEMPTION

**Key Idea:** By rising from the dead, Jesus saved humanity from the consequences of ‘original sin’.

- Eve fell to temptation according to the Bible and picked from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil which had been forbidden by God therefore introducing ‘original sin’ into the world.
- This event is known as the Fall and was when Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden.
- The Roman Catholic Church states that original sin is the way in which humans are *born with a lack of holiness about them* which is different from any actual sins that people commit themselves through choice.

- Some Christians believe that being made in the image of God would have made humans immortal. However, they lost their immortality when they ate the forbidden fruit.
- The phrase *original sin* does not appear in the Bible but the idea is found in Paul's letter to the Romans making this a Christian idea. (Not inherited from Judaism)
- Christians believe that redemption is God's plan for restoring his relationship with humans and those who seek forgiveness will have the relationship restored. The death of Jesus on the cross is seen as a substitute for the punishment that original sin deserved and reopens the way to God.

### Quotations

*"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned."* Romans 5:12

*"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."* 1 Corinthians 15:22

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16).

### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

**Key Idea:** If God is omnipotent, omniscient and omni-benevolent, how can God allow evil to exist?

- Christians say that there are two types of evil:
  - Moral Evil – Suffering caused by the cruel or uncaring actions of humans. Eg. Hitler and the Holocaust.
  - Natural Evil – Things that cause suffering but have nothing to do with humans. Eg. The Japanese Tsunami.
- Some people could argue that events which would be classed as natural evils could in fact indirectly be caused by humans such as the effects of climate change brought upon by the build up of greenhouse gasses over time.

### RESPONSES TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

**Key Idea:** Christians believe God has a plan beyond human understanding that allows evil and suffering.

- Some people might argue that a good God would not allow evil and suffering to exist. Options are:
  - God does not exist
  - God is not all powerful
  - God is responsible for evil and suffering as well as good.
- An argument to help explain the existence of pain and suffering is that Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. But if God had created them to be perfect, why were they allowed to disobey and choose to do evil by disobeying?
- The Christian Monk Irenaeus (130 – 202 CE) said that people needed to suffer and needed to be made to choose between good and evil otherwise they would be like mindless automatons and God wants people to choose to worship him. He suggested that humans were created immature rather than perfect and needed to grow and develop into

perfection. To understand and appreciate what good was, they needed to experience what good was not (evil). But can this apply to the suffering of babies?

- St. Augustine taught that evil was a lack of good. Evil happens when people do not choose to do good and live according to the standards that God has set for them. Evil, according to Augustine, is not a thing in itself, but what is left over when there is no good present.
- In the Old Testament, Job is a good man who worships God and lives a good life. An 'Adversary' (Satan in some translations) tests Job to see how devoted he is and if he will turn away from God. God allows Job to be tested as he is confident of Job's devotion. Job loses his wife, his children, his animals, his wealth and health, but does not lose his faith and is finally rewarded by God.

### Quotation

*"After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before."* Job 42:10

## COPING WITH SUFFERING

**Key Ideas:** Evil and suffering are all a part of God's plan which cannot be understood by humans. Suffering is a test. (Eg. Job) Suffering is a punishment for sin.

- Many people during the time of the New Testament believed that they were being punished for their sins through illness and suffering.
- Christianity teaches that God took human form and came to earth as Jesus of Nazareth and that he gave his life by dying on the cross because he was innocent of any sin and chose to die for others in order for the sins of humans to be forgiven. Because of this, Christians believe that God shared in human suffering.

Prayer

- When they are suffering, many Christians pray to God either alone or as part of a community in order to give them the strength to get them through.
- Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians often pray for a *saint* to intercede with God on behalf of someone who is suffering through **prayers of intercession**. In other denominations such as Church of England and Methodists, prayers of intercession for others are addressed directly to God.
- Christians accept that God does not always answer prayers in the way that they would like him to, but that God chooses the best for them.
- An example of faith taking away the suffering of sin is found in Matthews's gospel when Jesus heals a paralysed man. He says *'Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.'* (Matthew 9: 1-8)

### Quotations

*"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."* 1 Peter 5:7

*"For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows."* 2 Corinthians 1:5

## SOURCES AND REASONS FOR MORAL BEHAVIOUR

**Key Idea:** For Christians there are three main sources and reasons for moral behaviour: the Bible, faith in Christ and conscience. Roman Catholics would consider the teachings of the Church and the Pope in addition to these.

- Christians believe that because Jesus willingly gave up his life and was free from sin, Jesus set an example which they themselves should be prepared to follow. The ultimate sacrifice of Jesus was made out of love for others and his death atoned for all of the sins of humanity so that all those who have followed his teachings and accepted him as the Son of God would now have the opportunity to reach heaven when they die.
- As well as following the Ten Commandments and Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (The Beatitudes), Christians also follow the two Great Commandments (Mark 12:29 - 31 quotation below)
- Another source of moral guidance for Christians is to follow the example of Jesus' life and teachings because as the Son of God, they believe he spoke and acted in the right way. For this reason, Christians might try to work out the right thing to do by imagining what Jesus would do in the same circumstances. Eg. Christians may read in the gospels how Jesus tried to help those who were suffering. In order to follow his example, a Christian may take up an occupation as a doctor or nurse to help others.
- People often say that they **know what to and what not to do** because they are following their conscience, which some say may have developed based on their upbringing.
- Many Christians say that our 'conscience' is the voice of God telling us what to do.
- Humanists also believe in a conscience but they do not believe that it comes from God.

### Quotations

*"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."* Mark 8:34

*"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength... love your neighbour as yourself."* Mark 12:29 -31

## Good and Evil – Key Words

Key word	Definition
<b>Agnostic</b>	Someone who is not being sure whether God exists or not.
<b>Atheist</b>	Someone who does not believe in God.
<b>Conscience</b>	A sense of right and wrong.
<b>Golden rule</b>	The teaching that says 'love your neighbour as yourself'.
<b>Immorality</b>	The state of never dying.
<b>Job</b>	A good man from the Old Testament that was tested through suffering and remained faithful to God.
<b>Moral evil</b>	Suffering caused by actions done by humans.
<b>Natural evil</b>	Suffering caused by natural causes such as disease or natural disasters such as tsunamis.
<b>Omnibenevolent</b>	God is all-loving.
<b>Omnipotent</b>	God is all-powerful.
<b>Omniscient</b>	God is all-knowing.
<b>Omnipresent</b>	God is everywhere.
<b>Original sin</b>	The idea that after the Fall, all humans were born in a state of sinfulness, which need God's help to overcome.
<b>Redemption</b>	To be forgiven for your sins if you are sorry.
<b>Sacrifice</b>	Something that is offered up or given up; It often means something that is offered to God.
<b>The Devil/Satan</b>	The force of evil, seen as a figure tempting people to do wrong.
<b>The Fall</b>	Adam & Eve's breaking of God's commandments and being expelled from the Garden of Eden.
<b>Theist</b>	Someone who believes in God.

## Good and Evil – Practice Exam Questions

### Question 1

- a) What is meant by redemption? (1 mark)
- b) What is meant by the term 'original sin'? (2 marks)
- c) Describe Christian beliefs about God being good. (3 marks)
- d) Explain how Christians respond to the idea that a loving God allows evil and suffering to exist in the world. (6 marks)
- e) "Suffering is caused by the Devil." (12 marks) Discuss this statement. You should include different supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Christianity in your answer.

### Question 2

- a) What is meant by conscience? (1 mark)
- b) Suggest two causes of evil in the world. (2 marks)
- c) Give three ways in which Christians might try to behave morally. (3 marks)
- d) Explain why a Christian might say that suffering is a necessary part of human life. (6 marks)
- e) "You should only help people if you will get something in return." (12 marks) Discuss this statement. You should include different supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Christianity in your answer.

### Question 3

- a) What is meant by the Fall? (1 mark)
- b) State two things that Christians believe about the nature of evil. (2 marks)
- c) Describe the difference between moral and natural evil. (3 marks)
- d) Explain what Christians might do to help them cope with suffering. (6 marks)
- e) "God cannot prevent suffering." (12 marks) Discuss this statement. You should include different supported points of view and a personal viewpoint. You must refer to Christianity in your answer.

### Part D – Self Assessment

<b>Level 1</b>	<b>A weak answer</b>
<b>1-2</b> marks out of 6	<input type="checkbox"/> I have given a simple answer with a small amount of relevant information. <input type="checkbox"/> I have listed some answers but with little description, explanation or analysis. <input type="checkbox"/> I have made quite a few mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation.
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>A satisfactory answer</b>
<b>3-4</b> marks out of 6	<input type="checkbox"/> I have given some relevant information without detail. <input type="checkbox"/> I have given some description, explanation or analysis to support my answer. <input type="checkbox"/> I have presented my answer with some organisation. <input type="checkbox"/> I have referred to Christian teachings in my answer. <input type="checkbox"/> I have used some specialist religious or philosophical words, and used some of them correctly. <input type="checkbox"/> I have a few mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation.
<b>Level 3</b>	<b>A good answer</b>
<b>7-9</b> marks out of 6	<input type="checkbox"/> I have selected relevant information and developed it properly. <input type="checkbox"/> I have given a fairly complete and full description, explanation or analysis to support my answer. <input type="checkbox"/> I have presented my answer properly in a well structured format. <input type="checkbox"/> I have referred to Christianity and have given a full explanation of why the teaching(s) selected is/are important. <input type="checkbox"/> I have regularly used specialist religious or philosophical words, and used them correctly. <input type="checkbox"/> I have made a few mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

## Part E – Self Assessment

Essay topic/title:

<p><b>Level 1</b></p> <p><b>1-3</b> marks out of 12</p>	<p><b>A weak answer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have given a simple answer without relevant information.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have given an opinion that is inappropriate or without evidence.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have made quite a few mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 2</b></p> <p><b>4-6</b> marks out of 12</p>	<p><b>A limited answer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have given some relevant information without detail.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have put forward my opinion with a little bit of explanation.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have stated at least one viewpoint with some limited argument or discussion.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have thought a bit about the best way to organise my answer.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have vaguely referred to Christianity in my answer.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have used some specialist religious or philosophical words, and used some of them correctly.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have a few mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 3</b></p> <p><b>7-9</b> marks out of 12</p>	<p><b>A competent answer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have selected relevant information and developed it properly.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have given my own point of view in an appropriate way.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have discussed more than one different viewpoint and explained their importance.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have given reasons/evidence to back up the points of view that I mention.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have structured my answer properly.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have referred to Christian teachings and explained their relevance and importance.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have used specialist religious or philosophical words, and used most of them correctly.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have made occasional mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 4</b></p> <p><b>10-12</b> marks out of 12</p>	<p><b>A good answer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have shown that I understand the significance of the issue raised.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have given my own, appropriate, point of view, and properly backed it up with reasons.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have discussed and analysed several different points of view in detail.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have explained the relevant reasons/evidence supporting each point of view.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have justified my evaluation of the issue.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have presented my answer in a clear and organised way.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have referred to specific Christian teachings and analysed and explained their relevance and importance.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have correctly used specialist religious or philosophical words.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have made hardly any mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation.</li> </ul>