Question: "Why does God allow evil?"

Answer from GotQuestions.org: With people thinking about the September 11 terrorist attacks on the tenth anniversary of the horrific event, many are again asking the age-old question: "Why does God allow evil?" The Bible describes God as holy (Isaiah 6:3), righteous (Psalm 7:11), just (Deuteronomy 32:4), and sovereign (Daniel 4:17-25). These attributes tell us the following about God: (1) God is capable of preventing evil, and (2) God desires to rid the universe of evil. So, if both of these are true, why does God allow evil? If God has the power to prevent evil and desires to prevent evil, why does He still allow evil? Perhaps a practical way to look at this question would be to consider some alternative ways people might have God run the world:

1) God could change everyone's personality so that they cannot sin. This would also mean that we would not have a free will. We would not be able to choose right or wrong because we would be "programmed" to only do right. Had God chosen to do this, there would be no meaningful relationships between Him and His creation.

Instead, God made Adam and Eve innocent but with the ability to choose good or evil. Because of this, they could respond to His love and trust Him or choose to disobey. They chose to disobey. Because we live in a real world where we can choose our actions but not their consequences, their sin affected those who came after them (us). Similarly, our decisions to sin have an impact on us and those around us and those who will come after us.

2) God could compensate for people's evil actions through supernatural intervention 100 percent of the time. God would stop a drunk driver from causing an automobile accident. God would stop a lazy construction worker from doing a substandard job on a house that would later cause grief to the homeowners. God would stop a father who is addicted to drugs or alcohol from doing any harm to his wife, children, or extended family. God would stop gunmen from robbing convenience stores. God would stop high school bullies from tormenting the brainy kids. God would stop thieves from shoplifting. And, yes, God would stop terrorists from flying airplanes into buildings.

While this solution sounds attractive, it would lose its attractiveness as soon as God's intervention infringed on something we wanted to do. We want God to prevent horribly evil actions, but we are willing to let "lesser-evil" actions slide— not realizing that those "lesser-evil" actions are what usually lead to the "greater-evil" actions. Should God only stop actual sexual affairs, or should He also block our access to pornography or end any inappropriate, but not yet sexual, relationships? Should God stop "true" thieves, or should He also stop us from cheating on our taxes? Should God only stop murder, or should He also stop the

"lesser-evil" actions done to people that lead them to commit murder? Should God only stop acts of terrorism, or should He also stop the indoctrination that transformed a person into a terrorist?

3) Another choice would be for God to judge and remove those who choose to commit evil acts. The problem with this possibility is that there would be no one left, for God would have to remove us all. We all sin and commit evil acts (Romans 3:23; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8). While some people are more evil than others, where would God draw the line? Ultimately, all evil causes harm to others.

Instead of these options, God has chosen to create a "real" world in which real choices have real consequences. In this real world of ours, our actions affect others. Because of Adam's choice to sin, the world now lives under the curse, and we are all born with a sin nature (Romans 5:12). There will one day come a time when God will judge the sin in this world and make all things new, but He is purposely "delaying" in order to allow more time for people to repent so that He will not need to condemn them (2 Peter 3:9). Until then, He **IS** concerned about evil. When He created the Old Testament laws, the goal was to discourage and punish evil. He judges nations and rulers who disregard justice and pursue evil. Likewise, in the New Testament, God states that it is the government's responsibility to provide justice in order to protect the innocent from evil (Romans 13). He also promises severe consequences for those who commit evil acts, especially against the "innocent" (Mark 9:36-42).

In summary, we live in a real world where our good and evil actions have direct consequences and indirect consequences upon us and those around us. God's desire is that for all of our sakes we would obey Him that it might be well with us (Deuteronomy 5:29). Instead, what happens is that we choose our own way, and then we blame God for not doing anything about it. Such is the heart of sinful man. But Jesus came to change men's hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit, and He does this for those who will turn from evil and call on Him to save them from their sin and its consequences (2 Corinthians 5:17). God does prevent and restrain some acts of evil. This world would be **MUCH WORSE** were not God restraining evil. At the same time, God has given us the ability to choose good and evil, and when we choose evil, He allows us, and those around us, to suffer the consequences of evil. Rather than blaming God and questioning God on why He does not prevent all evil, we should be about the business of proclaiming the cure for evil and its consequences—Jesus Christ!

Recommended Resource: If God, Why Evil?: A New Way to Think about the Question by Norman Geisler.