

LOOKING TO ETERNITY

A RESOURCE AIMED AT NON-CHRISTIANS

The world hurts. Bad things happen to good people. things that are unfair. things that just shouldn't happen. especially not if there were a just God. a loving God. So is there a loving God? If there is why would He create such a painful world? Why doesn't He help us if He loves us so much? Do we deserve it? Or do we just have the wrong perspective?

This resource is designed to tackle these questions with a series of group discussions and some verses taken from the Bible. It will work best when everyone in the group engages with the questions and is honest with their answers. this can be a very sensitive subject so please be tactful with your comments.

Take a few minutes to find out what hurts?

- * **INVITE THE GROUP TO SHARE SOME OF THE TIMES IN THEIR LIVES THEY'VE BEEN HURT, THIS CAN BE EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL OR SPIRITUAL PAIN. (REMEMBER TO BE EXTRA SENSITIVE IF THE ISSUE IS HAPPENING IN THE PRESENT).**
- * **INVITE THE GROUP TO SHARE SOME TIMES WHEN THEY FEEL THAT THEY HAVE BEEN LET DOWN, BY THE WORLD OR BY GOD (IF THEY BELIEVE GOD EXISTS).**
- * **DID YOU EVER PLACE ANY BLAME? IF SO, ON WHOM/WHAT?**
- * **WAS THAT PERSON/ENTITY DESERVING OF THE BLAME?**

Whatever the problem/issue may be. it can be argued that the root of the pain came from the world: whether it be natural disaster. disease. or a pain inflicted by another person. But what makes/allows the world to be so painful? Stephen Fry once said "bone cancer in children? What's that about? ...Because the God who created this universe. if it was created by God. is quite clearly a maniac. utter maniac. Totally selfish."

Assuming God exists and He created the world:

- * **DO YOU AGREE WITH STEPHEN FRY'S COMMENT?**
- * **WOULD YOU OFFER ANY DIFFERENT ARGUMENT?**
- * **WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO GOD IF YOU HAD THE CHANCE?**

The Bible teaches that God made the universe. He made the world we live on. and it also teaches that because of the disobedient/selfish nature of humans. God cursed the ground so that men would have to work and God made it so that women would suffer during labour (Genesis 1-3). Basically. because of the disobedient/selfish nature of humans they were cut off from God and became exposed to the world and all its painful ways.

- * **DO YOU THINK THAT'S FAIR?**
- * **DO YOU THINK THAT HUMANS ARE SELFISH BY NATURE?**
- * **HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF SOMETHING YOU CREATED AND PUT ALL YOUR LOVE INTO TURNED ITS BACK ON YOU EVEN WHEN ALL YOU WANTED WAS THE BEST FOR IT?**

The Bible teaches that God hates it when we are in pain. It breaks His heart to see us that way because He loves us so much. So why doesn't He help us? What if He already has? What if He has given us a way to escape from all of this pain? What if He has already provided us with a safe space. constantly under His protection. a space where we can love Him back? He has. He has made a way for us to go to Heaven!

But it cost Him. It cost Him His son, Jesus Christ. So He knows pain. God came down to earth because He saw that we were in pain and were only headed towards more suffering and He doesn't want that for us. So He came down in the form of Jesus to experience this world, to experience the suffering and the pain and to take it to the grave with Him.

That's why Jesus had to die, and so every time you've suffered, God not only sympathized but He empathized as well because He has felt that pain too. He knows how you felt/feel and He sent Jesus to make a way to place without this brokenness. Because of what Jesus did, because He died and rose again we can rise again and be invited into Heaven.

Assuming that's true:

- * **WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE HEAVEN? WHY CAN'T IT BE NOW?**
- * **WHY DO WE HAVE TO WAIT SO LONG?**

We have to wait because it's a choice and God wants to give us time to make our own choice. The well-known phrase says "if you love something, set it free" and that's what God has done for us. He has set us free to make our own choices. At a conference a man once asked a theologian "how can a loving God send someone to Hell?" and the theologian replied "it is because He loves that person that He will send them to Hell. When you love someone you respect their choices and since that person decided they didn't want to know God in their life on Earth, God won't force them to spend eternity with Him."

Have you ever heard someone say "life's too short"? That's because it was never supposed to be the only life that we have. It's not God's first choice of how life should be, we're living in plan B right now but because God loves us so much, He has made a way for us to get back to plan A, which is Heaven. In comparison to eternity, life is incredibly short! And this statement isn't supposed to belittle anyone's pain, but when we get to Heaven, all the pain we ever felt will seem like just a paper-cut.

So maybe our perspective is wrong because when we are in pain, we compare it to other people's pain and their happiness, we compare it to the rest of the world. But when we compare our pain to the pure joy that is in Heaven then we have a whole new outlook on life.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:17-18

"FOR OUR LIGHT AND MOMENTARY TROUBLES ARE ACHIEVING FOR US AN ETERNAL GLORY THAT FAR OUTWEIGHS THEM ALL. SO WE FIX OUR EYES NOT ON WHAT IS SEEN, BUT ON WHAT IS UNSEEN, SINCE WHAT IS SEEN IS TEMPORARY, BUT WHAT IS UNSEEN IS ETERNAL."