

Can a Good God Really Allow Evil?

Below is a Facebook post from Dr. Ryan McLaughlin, a professor of Religious Studies at Siena College in Albany, NY. In the post, he argues that Christians probably should question God's goodness when confronted with the existence of evil in the world. Thoughts?

"Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature—that baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance—and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell the truth."

(Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov)

Ivan asks this question to Alyosha, who responds negatively. He couldn't do it. I resonate with this response. But the reality is that our world is built upon a structure of laws and chance in which **many** tiny and unwilling creatures will experience a grossly disproportionate amount of torment—not at the hands of evil agents, but rather as an inevitable result of the very **design** of the cosmos.

Perhaps the best response is to reject God's existence—or at least reject God's goodness and refuse to worship. I cannot pretend that this position doesn't make sense to me. I cannot pretend that people don't have damn good reasons to refuse to worship God even if God exists.

But I also acknowledge that this struggle between worship and accusation, between celebrating our existence and lamenting its cost, is part of the very Judeo-Christian narrative. Abraham insinuates that God's plans might be unjust (Gen.

18:25). Moses accuses God of apathy and mistreatment (Ex. 5:22-23). Jesus accuses God of forsaking him (Matt. 27:46; quoting Psalm 22).

I don't argue that we should stop worshiping God. But neither do I think we should worship God with complete ease. Whatever trust we place in God, whatever praise we offer, whatever celebration we have in the face of our own existence—all of these things we ought to couple with accusation, protest, and lament.

In my view, there can be no unquestioning worship of God when one examines the evidence at hand.

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[Ryan Patrick McLaughlin](#), PhD, is an Assistant Professor at Siena College. For a fuller examination of Dr. McLaughlin's views, you can read his articles at Patheos [here](#) and [here](#).