

THE ROOT CAUSES OF SUFFERING

Open-Book Review - Cube 1: Why Does God Allow Suffering?

Instructions: Complete this review as you work through the ThinkCube. Use the material to find each answer. The goal is to understand the biblical explanation for how suffering entered the world, why genuine freedom matters, and the Christian hope that God will ultimately reverse the effects of the Fall.

Premise 1: The Fall Gave Birth to Suffering

God's original creation was described as very good. Humanity was given genuine moral freedom, but Adam and Eve chose rebellion rather than trust and obedience. According to the biblical account, that rebellion introduced sin, death, and suffering into human experience. The same pattern of rejecting God's wisdom and experiencing painful consequences continues throughout human life.

1. What was the central issue in Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit?

- A. The nutritional value of the fruit
- B. Willful distrust and disobedience toward God
- C. Lack of food in the Garden
- D. Confusion about God's command

2. According to Romans 5, what entered human experience through sin?

- A. Only difficult work
- B. Sin and death
- C. Political conflict only
- D. Knowledge and technology

3. What everyday pattern does the ThinkCube connect with the Fall?

- A. People consistently obey moral boundaries
- B. People reject wise boundaries and then suffer consequences
- C. People never desire forbidden things
- D. Human choices rarely affect other people

4. Why was the forbidden tree a meaningful moral test?

- A. God had withheld everything good
- B. It provided a genuine opportunity to trust and obey amid abundance
- C. The fruit itself was evil
- D. Adam and Eve had no other food

Premise 2: God's Original Design Had No Suffering

Genesis presents God's original design as harmonious: humanity enjoyed fellowship with God, unity with one another, peace with creation, innocence within themselves, and life without death and decay. The Fall shattered these relationships. The ThinkCube therefore argues that suffering is not part of God's original ideal for humanity but a consequence of a creation damaged by sin.

1. How does Genesis 1:31 describe God's original creation?

- A. Mostly good
- B. Very good
- C. Incomplete
- D. Naturally violent

2. Which relationship was damaged by the Fall?

- A. Humanity's relationship with God
- B. Human relationships with one another
- C. Humanity's relationship with creation and self
- D. All of the above

3. According to the ThinkCube, what entered human experience after the Fall?

- A. Disease, decay, conflict, pain, and death
- B. Only spiritual questions
- C. Only hard work
- D. Nothing fundamentally changed

4. Why does the ThinkCube argue that blaming God for suffering misses the biblical explanation?

- A. Scripture says suffering is imaginary
- B. Scripture places the entrance of sin and suffering with humanity's misuse of freedom
- C. God has no concern about suffering
- D. Human choices have no consequences

Premise 3: God Could Have Made Man Good - But at the Expense of Free Will

A world containing genuine love and moral goodness requires meaningful choice. If human beings were programmed so that disobedience was impossible, their 'love' and 'goodness' would be mechanical rather than freely chosen. Free will makes rebellion possible, but it also makes genuine love, virtue, responsibility, worship, compassion, and relationship possible.

1. Why does genuine love require freedom?

- A. Love is meaningful only if it can be freely chosen
- B. Love requires suffering
- C. Love is merely instinct
- D. Freedom eliminates responsibility

2. What would be lost if humans were programmed to always obey?

- A. Physical strength
- B. Genuine moral choice and meaningful virtue
- C. Intelligence
- D. Creativity only

3. How does being made in God's image relate to freedom in this ThinkCube?

- A. Humans were given moral and rational capacities for responsible relationship with God
- B. Humans were created without moral responsibility
- C. Humans act only by instinct
- D. Freedom is unrelated to human dignity

4. What is the Christian hope for redeemed human freedom?

- A. Human beings become robots
- B. Freedom is perfected as redeemed desires align with God's goodness
- C. All choices disappear
- D. Moral goodness becomes unnecessary

Premise 4: God Will One Day Reverse the Fall

Christianity teaches that God can use suffering for redemptive purposes even though He did not cause humanity's rebellion. Trials can expose our need for God, teach perseverance and compassion, and display grace. Most importantly, Scripture promises that suffering is temporary: God will ultimately make all things new and completely remove death, mourning, pain, and the curse.

1. Which is one way Scripture says God can use suffering?

- A. To make evil good in itself
- B. To produce perseverance, character, compassion, and dependence on Him
- C. To prove He has abandoned humanity
- D. To make suffering permanent

2. What does Revelation 21:4 promise?

- A. Suffering will always continue
- B. There will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain
- C. Humanity will return to the present earth unchanged
- D. Only physical pain will disappear

3. What do the new heavens and new earth represent in the ThinkCube?

- A. The complete reversal of the Fall and the curse
- B. A symbolic return to ancient Israel
- C. A temporary improvement
- D. Human civilization fixing itself

4. What is the Christian's 'living hope' ultimately anchored in?

- A. Human progress
- B. Political reform
- C. The resurrection of Jesus Christ and God's promised inheritance
- D. Avoiding all present hardship

BE PREPARED TO SHARE

1. Someone asks: "If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world?" Using this ThinkCube, explain the biblical connection between God's original design, human freedom, the Fall, and the suffering we experience today.

2. Someone asks: "Why didn't God simply create people who could never do evil?" Explain why free will matters for genuine love and moral goodness, and describe the Christian promise that God will one day completely reverse the effects of the Fall.
