

## EVERY TRACK EVERY WEEK

### WEEK 30: Leader Study Guide

#### If God is Good and Great, Why is There Evil and Suffering in Our World?

-Welcome!

-Intro: Thanks for being here! Revisit last week's points

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\*Exchange numbers or invite attendees to join your ETEW Facebook group.

#### **INTRO:**

Hi, and welcome to Every Track Every Week. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am involved with Texas FCA Motocross through \_\_\_\_\_. I've been involved with FCA MX for \_\_\_ years and my favorite thing about the ministry is\_\_\_\_\_.

*This week's discussion is based upon episode #50 of our podcast "The Gospel Driven Athlete", titled "If God is Good and Great, Why is There Evil and Suffering in Our World? This is a great topic that helps us understand what the Bible has to say about why God allows storms to enter our lives. Whether they be storms in the literal sense or storms in the form of tragedy or other events that seem difficult in our lives.*

**-Ice Breaker Question: What was the cheesiest Evel Knievel stunt you've ever seen? Or more recently, what is the cheesiest Robby Knievel stunt you've ever seen?**

**-Podcast fact about Evel Knievel:** *In the history of his stunt career, Evel jumped countless cars, busses, and vans but more interestingly (and hilariously) he also jumped more than 100 rattle snakes, 13 sharks, and 2 mountain lions.*

*- Evel Knievel was fired from his first job with a mining company after attempting to wheelie a bulldozer but ending up careening into power lines and knocking out the local town's electricity supply.*

#### **1) What does it mean when we say that God is good?**

- When we say God is good we mean he is loving, compassionate, just, righteous, holy, jealous, and faithful.

-1 John 1:5b "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

-1 John 4:8b "God is love."

#### **2) What does it mean when we say that God is great?**

-We mean (among countless other descriptives) that God is unchanging, self-existent, all-powerful, sovereign, Creator, and sustainer.

-God's goodness found in 1John 4:8 "God is love" is also His greatness.

-The story of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 highlights the creative aspect of His greatness.



### **3) Can God be both good AND great?**

-Absolutely. And He is. Even if our limited creaturely perspectives keep us from being able to reconcile this, because we can't specify "why" all bad things happen, we cannot simply claim something contradictory to what is clear in scripture.

-The questions that often arise as we think about the complex issue of "the weeds among the wheat." \*see the week before last's podcast, or in other words the evil surrounding the good, are profound and important questions to wrestle with and to be able to answer to the extent that God gives us answers. We can overreact and try to bring in ideas that are outside of what the bible teaches or even introduce pop-psychology into the mix and really go off the rails in a hurry. We must maintain humility and confess that we do not know God the way God knows Himself (archetypal theology). We can only know Him based upon what He has made clear to us (ectypal theology), and sometimes there is an aspect of mystery that we cannot stick in a neat little box.

-in Michael Horton's book "Core Christianity" Horton says, "If God were not good and great, moral and natural disasters would engulf us."

### **4) Before we dive too deep into this, let's define terms that play a key role for a solid foundation when discussing the reality of evil.**

#### **-What is evil?**

- Evil is a corruption of the good.
- We can only really even talk about evil, because we experience good.

#### **-Where did evil come from?**

-We don't have to make it very far in the bible to find evil entering God's altogether "good" creation. In Genesis chapter 3 we see that although God made Adam and Eve fully capable of following His law completely (something we no longer have the ability to do), they fall to the temptation of Satan. In this story, Satan corrupted the good word and good confidence that God created and instilled in Adam.

-Something that is critical to have an understanding of is the fact that God did not do the corrupting. God is perfect, holy, blameless. "*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*" 1 John 1:5

-Evil came from man's active disobedience.

### **5) How does the fact that we live in a world where it is a clear reality that evil is all around us and where bad things happen regularly, make it challenging to reconcile the fact that God is both good AND great?**

-questions arise (often times really really good ones) because of the difficulty to reconcile the two biblical realities that God is both good AND great. I think the question that most of us on some level or another have wrestled with (maybe not in these exact terms) is, "If God is good, then He is not great enough to stop evil from happening... and if He is great enough to stop evil from happening, He is not good enough to care..." I think that is one of the most common objections. And it's a good one. But like we said early on, our inability to see "why" in our limited human capacity, does not give us the freedom to claim something contradictory to the Truth as outlined in the bible. We must wrestle with these topics and go to the Truth found clearly in scripture that God is both Good AND great.

### **6) What are some biblical examples of God being in control of the evil happening in the world?**



-It's important to acknowledge and lean on the biblical truth of God's sovereignty. God is the sovereign one. He alone is in control.

-We see a multitude of examples all throughout the bible of times when (were we in the shoes of the biblical character) we would say "this is evil and no good can come of this!"

-Noah and the flood- how do you think the people outside the ark felt? But we clearly see God being in full control and accomplishing His redemptive purposes through this.

-Joseph and the famine- Joseph's brothers left him for dead in a pit... God rescued Him from the pit and ultimately gave Him a position to save the lives of a nation. This happened literally in history and also as a "type or shadow" of Christ. So through this terrible abandonment, we see a nation rescued, and we see an example of how Christ would rescue His people.

-Moses and Pharaoh. We see in the Exodus account that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He did not give him the ability to believe. God was in control of that. His people were in captivity. Slaves. God used this entire nasty situation for our good. We can look back and identify with the ungrateful Israelites who abandon God at every turn and yet God is faithful to them, as He is faithful to us.

-Job. This is one of the clearest accounts of how God was sovereign over a situation that was ridiculously hard for Job. He lost everything... everything. And even still we see God use it for His glory and Job's good.

-Paul. God gave Paul a "thorn in his side" that tormented him, but ultimately taught him to rely on God. He also allowed Paul to be shipwrecked (multiple times) all of which resulted in him having the opportunity to preach the Gospel to people whom he would not have had the opportunity to otherwise.

-The ultimate example of evil being within the sovereign control of God was Christ on the cross. The worst evil in history accomplished the greatest good.

## 7) So with all that being said, why is there suffering? Why is there evil?

-Sometimes we don't have the full answer to this question. We do know for sure though that the answer is NOT that God is not good or great.

-Also, it is important to note is that evil and bad things for believers is not "payback". It's definitely not karma. These things come from the poor idea of "retribution theology". In other words, people often think that "if I'm good, God will bless me. If I'm bad, God will cause trouble to come my way." This was rampant in Jesus' time and it is just as prevalent today. We see in John 9:2 *the disciples ask Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"* They clearly thought that this "bad thing" of blindness was a result of this dude's sin. Jesus replies ***"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."***

## 8) How should these realities of evil inform our lives, thoughts, and actions?

-Let's pray. We will meet right here next week! Same time!

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