

Letters From a Skeptic Lesson 2: Is Freedom Worth all the Suffering?

“In this life we have three great lasting qualities—faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of them is love.”

1 Cor 13:13 (Phillips)



“Evil is a necessary possibility if love is also possible... even God couldn't have it any other way.”

Homework Report

How did it go with the questions? What did people have to say about Christianity?

Correspondence 2: “Why is the world so full of suffering?”

1. <Read the fathers's second letter, pp.27-28>
2. Father “**doesn't buy**” the distinction between **individuals** and **organized religion**
 - a. Refers to church as “*God's delegated authority on earth.*” (Catholic idea?)
3. The father is **blaming God** for allowing us to have freedom that leads to suffering.
4. **Father's logic** goes like this:
 - a. A caring creator (God) wouldn't let people suffer
 - b. He cites rape, mutilation, droughts, and famine
 - c. His **objection**: “*When the freedom to decide to do harm results in pain and suffering to innocent people, God is simply not the 'loving' God you make Him out to be!*”
 - d. His **conclusion**: The world wouldn't look like ours does if there were an all-powerful, all-loving God behind it all
5. **Comments?**

<Read the son's reply, pp.29-31>

1. **Tough stuff**, and the son **acknowledges** the father's “*extremely good points*”
 - a. Even mentions that the Bible contains examples of man's anger and frustration at God
2. Says we must think through who is **really responsible** for this **evil**
 - a. The son claims “*responsibility can't be attached to God.*”
3. Since **creation**, man has **blamed God** for **man's poor choices**
 - a. Remember when God asked **Adam** about eating the **forbidden fruit**?

“‘Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’ And the man said, ‘The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.’”

Gen 3:11-12

Adam appears to imply that God is responsible here. He seems to be saying “*This is your fault, God, since you gave me the woman and she gave me the fruit!*”

4. Then **Greg asks** “*So why doesn't God intervene?*” and **answers his own question**:
 - a. “*A freedom which was prevented from being exercised whenever it was going to be misused simply wouldn't be freedom... God creates free people who can do as they please, not determined instruments who always end up doing what He pleases.*”

5. Greg (paraphrased): “*Evil in the world is a necessary possibility if love is possible... Even God couldn’t have it any other way.*”
6. Comments?

Correspondence 3: “Is the risk of freedom worth the suffering?”

<Read the father’s **third letter**, pp. 32-33>

1. The father admits that at least some of what the son says is making sense, but **questions** whether this type of **freedom** is worth all the **suffering**
 - a. Looks at it from a “**cost/benefit**” point of view (sales manager, 35 years, **Uniroyal**)
 - b. Says it is “...*quite frankly, poor management*” on God’s part
2. **Comments?** What do you think about this argument?

Homework: Read Correspondence 5 and Correspondence 6, and...

Ask a couple of your non-church-going neighbors/friends/coworkers to tell you very briefly what they *really* think about the Christianity. Tell them that this is a **homework** assignment, and you really need them to be **candid** and **honest** as possible.