



February 18, 2018

“Understanding Evil in Our World”

Ecclesiastes 4

Pastor Gary Hamrick

When you think about all of the evil, injustice, and oppression in the world, have you ever wondered: Where is God? These things cause some people to question the meaning of life, the existence of God, or the goodness of God. In this message, Pastor Gary offers a perspective that will bring hope and comfort to everyone who may have been impacted by the injustice and wickedness of our world.

Oppression And Evil In The World

1. Solomon was troubled by those who oppressed others and those who suffered under oppression.
 - a. **Ecclesiastes 4:1** - *“Again I looked and saw all the **oppression** that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the **oppressed** - and **they have no comforter**; power was on the side of their **oppressors** - and **they have no comforter**.”* (Emphasis added)
2. Solomon was troubled by evil and those who suffered because of acts of evil.
 - a. **Ecclesiastes 4:3** - *“... [I saw] the evil that is done under the sun.”*
3. Pastor Gary said: “[Bible scholars] are not sure what [Solomon was] exposed to or what [he witnessed in the world], but I think it is safe to say that not much has changed in 3,000 years. ... Wherever you have people, you will have oppression, evil, and injustice...”
4. Regarding the school shooting on Wednesday, February 14, 2018, in Parkland, Florida, Pastor Gary said: “The common denominator [to many different kinds of tragedies] is that there is undeniable evil in the world. [This is] not a debate about one particular weapon. ... [This] evil has caused a lot of people to question the meaning and purpose of life, and to question [where is] God in the equation?”

5. Undeniable evil in the world has caused some people to question God in two ways: 1) The existence of God. 2) The goodness of God.

The Existence Of God

6. There are a number of questions people will ask, such as:
 - a. How do we reconcile evil in the world with an all loving God?
 - b. If evil is allowed to exist in the world, then is it true that God doesn't [exist]?
 - c. Aren't evil, oppression, and injustice more compatible with a non-existent God than an all loving God?
 - d. Isn't it true that pain and suffering in the world demonstrates the absence of God?
7. Referring to a book written by well-known Christian apologist, Ravi Zacharias, Pastor Gary said: "If evil exists... then one must assume that good exists, in order to know the difference [between the two]. And, if good exists, then one must assume that a moral law exists, by which one can differentiate between good and evil. And, if a moral law exists, then one must recognize that there has to be a supreme moral law giver, [which] leads one to the existence of God." ¹

The Goodness Of God

8. Solomon wasn't questioning the existence of God; he was questioning the goodness of God.
9. There are hard and real questions that cause people to question the goodness of God, such as:
 - a. Why would a good God tolerate evil and injustice in the world?
 - b. How can a good God stand idly by while so many people are so horribly impacted by the evil in our world?
10. Pastor Gary provided a brief overview of creation, the fall of Satan, the fall of man, etc.
 - a. Use this link to access the Cornerstone Chapel Teaching Library (16:15 to 22:20) - https://cornerstonechapel.net/?page_id=418&i=1284
11. Pastor Gary said: "Satan is still at work, influencing in a major way, the world's ideals, [ideas, opinions, values, thoughts, and actions]. He influences philosophies and education. [He's] the reason [for the] false religions that have been spawned

¹ *Why Suffering? Finding Meaning and Comfort When Life Doesn't Make Sense.*
https://www.amazon.com/Why-Suffering-Finding-Meaning-Comfort/dp/145554969X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1519229651&sr=8-1&keywords=ravi+zacharias+why+suffering

because of his lies and deception. [The world] is Satan's playground and he's having a heyday with humanity."

- a. **1 John 5:19** - "... *the whole world is under the control of the evil one [Satan].*"
- b. **Ephesians 2:2** - "... *[Satan is] the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*"
- c. **Revelation 12:9** - "... *Satan, who leads the whole world astray.*"
- d. **John 12:31** - "... *the prince of the world...*"

12. Solomon wrote about seeing "*the tears of the oppressed...*"

- a. "Through all the centuries tears have flowed enough to float a navy." - F.B. Meyer

13. Solomon saw the same things we see in our day, but it's important to remember that Solomon had lost sight of God, so in order to have a proper understanding of the answers to the hard questions, we must not lose sight of God.

14. Solomon failed to remember what his father, David, had written concerning the fact that the Lord himself was the comforter!

- a. **Psalms 86:7, 17** - "*In the day of my trouble I will call to you, for you will answer me. ... Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.*"

15. Solomon also forgot about the Lord being the one who would judge injustice, oppression, and all manner of evil!

- a. **Jude 14-15** - "... *the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*"
- b. **Acts 17:31** - "*For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.*"
- c. **2 Corinthians 10:6** - "*And he will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.*"

16. Evil exists, but it exists apart from God, because Satan is the author of evil.

17. The perfect world God intended for us was spoiled a long time ago when Satan rebelled, and mankind sinned against God.

18. As a result of sin, every form of evil and injustice now affects all of us to some degree.

19. God put in motion a plan to save us from our sins, to comfort us in our sorrows, and to rescue us from this wicked world through Jesus Christ!
 - a. [2 Peter 3:9](#) - *“The LORD is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

20. Pastor Gary said: “All that seems [to be] out of order, and all that seems [to be] out of balance, and all that seems [to be] crooked in this world will be leveled and will be made straight. Every injustice will be judged, [and] every oppression will be lifted, and every evil will be punished! ... So, don't turn from God. Please, turn toward God, and find his grace, and his comfort, and his hope in [this] wicked world. God will take care of this wicked world. [But], in the meantime he will help us to persevere, and he will comfort us along the way.”
 - a. [Luke 3:5-6](#) - *“Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Ecclesiastes 4:1-3](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they doubted the existence of God and/or the goodness of God.
3. Read and discuss the questions people ask concerning the existence of God. (See #6 above)
4. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's summary of God's creation, the fall of Satan. (See #10 above - NOTE: Provide a video option or an overview that you prepare in advance.)
5. Read and discuss [Psalm 86:7, 17](#).
6. Spend time reading and talking about the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared concerning the fact that the Lord will judge injustice, oppression, and all manner of evil. (See #15 and #20 above)
7. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).