

In this thread I have started to grapple with the question of how there can be a good, loving, and powerful God in charge of the world in the face of the massive suffering experienced by the human race - not just in general terms ("there sure is a lot of suffering out there!") but in very specific concrete terms, as what individuals experience. What we experience. What you have experienced. How does one make sense of personal suffering (especially intense suffering) in a Judeo-Christian world in which it is widely believed that there is a God who is sovereign and in control?

One of the most interesting things about this question is that - unlike anything else I ever encounter, think about, read about, or write about in my career as a biblical scholar - this is a question that virtually *everyone* has reflected on and has an opinion about. Just about everyone. Even those who say "I have no idea!" are invariably people who have thought about it and realized that none of the solutions make sense, or that it is beyond their ability to figure out. Many, many people (most people) do have some kind of solution or, more often, a set of solutions, which either satisfy them intellectually or, more important, comfort them emotionally.

My view is that some approaches to the problem of suffering are better than others. In this post I'd like to talk about two approaches that strike me as completely unhelpful. These are approaches I encountered after I wrote my book [God's Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question - Why We Suffer.](#) The first approach was taken by a well-known, high profile biblical scholar who took an intellectual (I would even say cerebral) approach to the issue. The other was taken by a poor, unknown mother who was grappling with a horrible incident in her life.

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