

## Faith in Five – Adults Good vs. Evil



1. There are many theories, teachings and perspectives on why there is evil in the world. The problem with addressing evil and its existence in a logical manner posits that God who is all-knowing and good must have some flawed characteristic in Him or in His plan. We will never be able to explain all there is to know about God, whose realm is outside of our universe. Isaiah 55:8 states, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”.

**We do know God IS love** (1 Jn 4:16-18), and he is the source of all that is good. God only creates that which is good, as it states in Genesis, “God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good” (Genesis 1:31). How do we address the question: “If God is good, why is there evil in the world?”

2. There are some concepts to consider ([Source](#)):
  - a. **Goodness** – All that is pure, lovely, benevolent towards others; it is the quality of being morally good or virtuous. One definition describes goodness as the quality of being like God. Good means morally right, desired or approved of; having pleasing or superior qualities.
  - b. **Evil** – the absence of good which results in suffering
  - c. **Suffering** – pain or loss that harms us. Many believe suffering is a symptom of evil.
  - d. **Privation** – the absence of something. Catholics believe the absence of good is evil.
  - e. **Free Will** – the ability for man to choose right from wrong without being controlled. This ability is given by God.
  - f. **Natural Law** – Universal laws of right and wrong that apply to all humans at all times. “The natural law, the Creator’s very good work, provides the solid foundation on which man can build the structure of moral rules to guide his choices” (CCC 1959).
  - g. **Conscience** – the God inspired feeling of right and wrong
3. Catholics believe that free will is a gift from God. God created humans with the ability to choose between good and evil, He does not force His way upon us. When humans choose the wrong thing, it causes suffering. The story of Genesis tells how Adam and Eve decided to eat the forbidden fruit, going against God’s wishes. This is the first original sin, sometimes known as the Fall. This sin or breaking of God’s law is humanity’s rejection and opposition to God (CCC, 386). **Sin produced all the evil, suffering, and death in this world. Humans are to blame for the suffering, not God.** Original sin is a symbol that we all share some responsibility for the evil and suffering in the world. St. Augustine gives three answers to the question of suffering:
  - The existence of evil helps people to appreciate the good in the world.
  - Evil is just the absence of good things. This is called privation.
  - God allows suffering because He is omnipotent and good. He is always able to bring a greater good out of suffering.

4. Suffering and misfortune are at times represented as evil in the Bible –a result of original sin. For us as Catholic Christians, we believe there is salvific value in suffering. Saints Paul and Barnabas in the New Testament taught that Christians "must endure many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). St. Paul also taught that God permitted him to bear sufferings beyond his strength and endurance in order to teach Paul to trust more in God (2 Corinthians 1:8-9).
5. God did not create evil but allows the possibility of it to occur. Evil is the absence of good, and the choosing of something that is contrary to God's will. It is the ultimate result of the abuse of the incredible gift of free will that God has given to us. God has given Man the dignity to make his own choices and the responsibility to accept the consequences. God allows us to choose evil "that he [Man] might of his own accord seek his Creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him (CCC, 1730)."
6. CCC 1704 states, "By free will, we are capable of directing ourselves towards the true good." God creates us with a capacity to know and love him, and we have a natural desire to seek the truth about Him. Our search for God does not go unaided; indeed, He calls us to Himself and writes His law on our hearts to help us draw closer to Him. Jesus told the apostles, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). We deepen our relationship with God by following Him, and in doing so, we become more fully ourselves in line with His Will.
7. The Catechism of the Catholic Church 1775 states, "The perfection of the moral good consists in man's being moved to the good not only by his will but also by his "heart"." The voice of this law that God gives us, calls man's heart to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil. Through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, the power to be able to do good and to be good is always there. The formation of conscience is established in a conversion of our heart, and a willingness to say yes to God as disciples of Christ. Man's conscience does not exist apart from his intellect or free will. Conscience is not the "source" of morality, but rather is its "servant" ([Source](#)).
8. Conscience is "a judgment of reason" by which we determine whether an action is right or wrong (CCC 1778). Conscience helps us hear the voice of God; it helps us recognize the truth about God and the truth about how we ought to live. It has the inclination to direct our free will towards choosing the good, the beautiful and the Truth (CCC 1781). If our conscience is not well-formed, we will not be well-equipped to determine right from wrong. When we align ourselves with the truth, our consciences will help guide us accordingly. ([Source](#)). "A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful" (CCC, 1783).

When we decide to follow Christ and His will, we have the ability to develop a strong moral compass through the strengthening of our conscience. This is achieved by grace through our intimate walk with God. Prayer allows the grace of God by the working of the Holy Spirit to help us discern situations, "The spirit [Who] will give you all knowledge". This knowledge is found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the holy Scriptures, in the practices and rubrics of the Church, where we are given authoritative direction. An examination of conscience helps us reflect on our actions, to assess if we are living the way God wants. In our faith community, we can find prudent advice and learn from good

examples. We can obtain spiritual direction from the community of believers, which may include our pastor, confessor or spiritual guide ([Source](#) and CCC, 1785).

9. "The most basic principle of Christian moral teaching is the strict obligation a person has to follow the judgment of a well-formed conscience" ([Source](#)). The moral choices we make determine the character and direction of our lives.

There may come a time when one is led by a morally responsible conscience but chooses to believe or act in a way contrary to what the Church teaches. In these situations, it is important to remain humble and respectful of the Catholic Church, desiring to remain in communion with the faith community, believing and obeying as fully as possible what the Church believes and teaches. Though we may disagree with some principles of the Church, we can still accept the teaching as correct. God in his love and mercy can still transform us, shedding light on the truth. Our yes to God is to surrender in trust to Him.



**For further, in-depth study:** [The Catechism of the Catholic Church \(CCC\) 1730-1802](#)

**"See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil". Deuteronomy 30:15**

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