

Q&A with Jesus on the Problem of Evil

Norman: Hello world, I'm Norman Mailer. Tonight we have a very special guest with us. He is a man who many consider to be the physical embodiment of everything that is good in the world. His name is Jesus Christ, give him a hand please.

Jesus: Hi Norman. My name is actually just Jesus.

Norman: Fair enough. Jesus I'm going to start with a question that people all over the world has been dying to ask you for two thousand years. Why is there suffering in this world when God is a benevolent and omnipotent being?

Jesus: Norman in my life I fed thousands, healed multitudes, and led a life that was dedicated to the ideals of love, self-sacrifice, forgiveness, and generosity. What have you done?

Norman: I really don't see how my own actions are relevant in this discussion. We're discussing you and your Father, Jesus.

Jesus: Your actions are the heart of the matter, Norman.

Norman: How so? I'm not the one with the power to make this world a fantastic place that is free of poverty and evil, you are Jesus.

Jesus: How much do you earn Norman?

Norman: That's a bit of a personal question; let's just say I earn enough to get by.

Jesus: You earn enough for fifty men to get by. You have the power, from your income alone, to change the lives of many people. If you love, forgive, and serve others, you have the power to change many more.

Norman: I see what you're trying to do. You're trying to turn this around on me. I don't have the ability to alleviate all suffering, but God does. If he actually existed, I don't see why he wouldn't just do it?

Jesus: First ask yourself why *you* don't utilise all tools available to you to alleviate suffering, and then it may become clearer.

Norman: Are you saying God is as lazy and indifferent as I am?

Jesus: No, I'm saying that you have no right to ask God this question. Only those who do utilise all tools do.

Norman: You're dodging the question Jesus, and I think it's because you don't have a decent answer.

Jesus: Much of the world's suffering would disappear quite rapidly if humanity did not embrace indifference.

Norman: But that isn't enough, is it? Sure famine might disappear, and I'll even grant you that poverty and social inequality is the source of most of today's suffering. What about genuine acts of individual evil, when someone kills someone else. The victim, and the victim's family, suffers.

Jesus: Anyone who suffers or dies in the name of good is rewarded. They will be rewarded with something that is far better than your material abundance. Do not pity these people, Norman, or create intellectual arguments based on their existence. Envy them.

Norman: Hmm... You can try to divert the topic as much as you want, Jesus, but the logical inconsistency still exists. Any freethinking person can see it.

Jesus: If this inconsistency were not to exist, it wouldn't change the way you lived. As an intellectual debate the problem of evil is a man-made construction, with defences and rebuttals being thrown around as if it made any difference who wins the argument.

Norman: I think it does matter who wins this argument.

Jesus: You can formulate a 'solution' to the problem to justify a belief already held that the presence of evil is not a serious concern or worth any attention in an intellectual or social sense. Or, alternatively, you can choose to reject all solutions to justify the belief already held that God can't exist; which you hold because you don't have any personal convictions that one does exist.

Norman: ...

Jesus: Both are illegitimate. Instead of being a discussion on the reality of evil and how its force in the world affects the way we feel, think, and act, the problem of evil is a vanity exercise used to serve the illusion that a person's perception of the world is founded on objective impersonal reason. It isn't an existential question, and therefore it's a meaningless one.

Norman: I'm sorry Jesus but we don't have any more time. I don't know what the hell you were talking about, but it was fun.

By Timothy Neal