

# OpenTheo

## Are Humans Flawed Because of God's Lack of Power?

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**#STRask** - Stand to Reason

Questions about how to respond to someone who says he believes God made humans flawed as a result of his lack of power and why worship is good for us.

- \* How would you respond to someone who says he believes God made humans flawed as a result of his lack of power?
- \* Can you explain why worship is good for us?

### Transcript

Welcome to Stand to Reason's hashtag-STRask podcast. I'm Amy Hall and I'm here with Greg Koukl to answer the questions that you sent us on Twitter. To field the questions whether we answer them.

To address the questions that you send in. Hi, Greg. Alright, let's start with a question from Duncan Snow.

One of my very good friends believes that a creator God exists, but he made humans flawed as a result of his lack of power. How would you respond to this unique worldview? Well, following the tactic approach, it is unique, by the way. I don't know that I've ever quite heard it that way before.

As I'd want a little bit more explanation, okay, so God's lack of power. Where does he get the... How is God lacking in power? I just want more clarification. Although the point is fairly straightforward, it's always, I think, tactically sound to get the other person talking more about it, because sometimes ideas that seem clear or moderately lucid at first, sometimes after they talk about him for a little bit, they don't sound as good as they did.

So this is a good idea to get people talking, and that'll also give you more information to work with. But our second Collema question is, why would you think that? My impulse is not going to be to try to refute the charge. I don't know why anyone would think that that's the case at all.

So he believes as a creator, God, okay? If he's a creator, well, he must be pretty powerful, all right? Now, if he made man evil, then he himself is responsible for causing something evil, which means God would be evil himself, okay? But if God's evil, then what is the ground of goodness, all right? Part of the in the book Street Smarts, which by the way, and I'll probably be mentioning this a bit through the rest of the summer, is being released on the 12th of September, and it's already available through on Amazon for pre-order. But in that, I talk a little bit about the problem of evil and how there is only one and the, I should say the existence of evil, because people think the existence of evil is an argument against God, and then they want to explain why would God allow evil? Well, the answer to why God would allow evil is the task of theodicy. But it's also a more difficult question to answer because it's hard to figure in the mind of God while why he allowed these different things.

I was just listening, reading earlier today, Paul Little's know why you believe, and I'm at least one aspect of his answer I'm completely dissatisfied with, so there are different reasons why God might allow evil. But the fact of evil in the world demonstrates the fact of good in the world of which evil is a departure, and the only way to ground the idea of good from which evil is a violation is in God. There's no other way to ground objective morality.

Nothing else works. And only one, I've only heard one thing really propose. But I talk about the issues there in the street smarts, and I make the case that there's a bonus for the Christian or Christian theist, and that is not only does the presence of evil provide evidence for God, but it is evidence that God is good.

And without a God who is good, there is no good at all. And if God is evil, then there is no good. This presents a problem for Duncan's friend.

Oh, yeah, there is a God and he's powerful, but he's, but he created evil people, which means God is evil. Okay. Well, now I want to ask what is evil? You have to have some standard of good in order to measure the departure from good that we call evil.

Okay. Now, where did this standard come from? If the standard comes from outside of God, then God is in God. God's just a creature who has power.

Lots of it, apparently, but he's just a creature and he himself is measured by some external standard to be an evil God for creating evil people. By the way, that is the attempt that the the well known Euthyphro dilemma or Euthyphro dilemma offered by Socrates has is meant to, it's what that dilemma is meant to show regarding Christianity that Christianity has this problem that you can't ground or I should say goodness is either an act of God's will, a mere act of his will, or it's based on some outside standard. And therefore, God wouldn't really be God.

And this approach that Duncan's friend takes makes goodness an outside standard to

God, which God himself doesn't live up to because he does the evil thing of creating evil people. So I went maybe a little fast for some of you listening. Of course, we've covered this ground many times before in different ways and I go in great detail in Street Smarts in the chapter called evil, atheism's fatal flaw because the existence of evil is fatal to atheism.

It's not fatal to Christianity or Christian theism or any form of theism in itself. Okay. So but I'm also trying to help people to see that there are entailments with every view that a person has regarding spiritual things.

So what I mean by entailments is there are other things that kind of go along with the statement. So for example, if you say there is no God and it turns out God is the only adequate grounding for objective goodness, then if there is no God, then there is no objective goodness. If it turns out that materialism, no God, just the particles is the truth, then there is no transcendent value to human beings.

Nothing special about us. We're just like, we're just stuff. Also no transcendent purpose.

No, it may be that that's the way it is. The point I'm making right now is you can't just grab something like this and say, well, okay, God created man, but he made man evil. And so it's God's fault.

And that's the explanation of things. Well, that may be the explanation for things, but there's a whole bunch of stuff that comes along with the package. And if the things that come along with the package seem false and absurd on their face, then something is wrong with the view that creates this entailment.

So if that's true, and this is the way I'm arguing, if Duncan's friend is right, then God is evil. But if God is evil, then there's some external standard of good that God is measured by. Therefore, God isn't really God.

He's just a finite creature of some sort, beholden to another standard. But where does that other standard come from? Well, there's no place to way to explain it. So there is no other standard.

So there is no good. So there is no evil. And so this whole point of view, when you think about what the view entails, includes biological necessity, then the view implodes.

Okay. And this is one of the reasons that I'm a Christian is because the Christian understanding of reality, even as it touches the issue of evil, does not implode. It's coherent and it makes sense.

And the entailments that are involved with that view turn out to be things that resonate with our deepest intuitions about reality and meaning and purpose and morality and all that other stuff. So simply put, I have no reason to believe the view that Duncan's friend

has offered. And why would Duncan's friend offer that view? I don't know.

But if he offers that view, he needs to understand that this entails some other things too biological process. And if the things that it entails turned out to be ridiculous or incoherent or destructive to his own original statement, then this is not a legitimate approach to the problem. Does that make sense? Yeah.

And I agree with you, Greg, that the first thing you have to do is ask him questions because he needs to explain what he means by this. He needs to explain what his reasons are for thinking this because I went where you went immediately, Greg, to the idea of moral, morally flawed, but he might just be talking about physically flawed or some he might be talking about flaws in design. He might be talking about anything.

We don't even know. I mean, it could be he's saying that we weren't made perfectly well. And so maybe that's what he's arguing against.

So if that's the case, then I would say one thing that you can ask is how do you know, well, actually in either case, whether you're talking about morally flawed or physically flawed. And by the way, God did not create people morally flawed. I mean, that's one thing that you could just bring out immediately.

But he cannot evaluate that something was made to a less good level, unless he knows what the goal is. That's right. And so he can't just you can't say something is imperfect unless you have a view of what the perfect is that it doesn't match.

Exactly. Well, we don't. Okay, let's say God wants to create creatures who are dependent on him.

That's his goal. And so we are limited in various ways in power, in abilities, and all these different things. That doesn't have anything to do with his lack of power.

That could be the purpose for his creation. So there could be God creates a creation in which built in is the ability to get sick. And that ability to get sick means that then we have to depend on God somehow in the midst of our sickness, which would mean that the sickness is not a bad thing in terms of God's it's not a flaw in his design.

It is part of his design. But even that makes sense. Yeah, kind of, but I but but I'm not even talking about anything like sickness.

Right now I'm just talking about weakness or limitations because as human beings, we can't fly. You know, we have to sleep. We have certain limitations, certain things that that he might consider flawed.

But this is this is my point. What is he considering flawed? So this is something you need to bring out because you need to understand what he is calling a flaw. Now, I also think

that what it says in the Bible is that from the foundation of the world, God intended for Jesus to die on the cross.

And I think there was a purpose for that. I think God wanted to reveal certain things about himself through that. And if that's his goal, then there's there's no flaw in his creation because he's achieving that goal.

So it all comes down to what the goal is, what kind of flaw he's talking about and all these different ideas come into play because once you start asking questions, he could go in any of these directions. Right. Right.

Right. So if it's I was presuming in my response that it's a moral flaw in this entails a bunch of other things about the nature of who he called God, who turns out not to be God at all if there's a moral flaw because the notion of God is the notion of understanding of perfection, of all sorts of perfections. He's the greatest possible being.

And so certainly moral perfection would be part of that. And that moral perfection would be compromised if God was responsible, directly responsible for for evil or some evil circumstance. When I say evil, I mean, morally culpable evil, not some discomfort that might be false someone.

By the way, that's what Isaiah is talking about when he says God is responsible for good and for evil. He's talking about the problems that came upon Israel that Israel understood to be evil for them subjectively, not moral evil there. And if people sometimes get confused about that.

So what would you say if his friend responded to you? Well, I don't think he meant to make people morally flawed, but it was his lack of power because maybe that's his, his argument. So what's okay. So then what's happening here is that the God in view is not omnipotent.

Then why would anyone call him God? God in the sense that Christians are talking about any theist is talking about him, you know, any monotheist is talking about him. In what sense is God? Because what we're not doing is we're not talking about something like Zeus, a finite creature who has finite capabilities. And it may be a divine spiritual creature of some sort, but only can only do certain things and can't do other things.

Okay, well, now you're talking about a different sort of thing entirely than what we're talking about. So I'd be wondering, well, in what sense is he God then if he's not omnipotent? Yeah, that's that's another good question. I have never heard of someone who thinks that there's a creator but that he doesn't have that he has his lack of power is behind everything that's happened.

Yeah, I mean, to be the creator, I mean, that's got, you need gods of power to create everything. But it might be that this is a different category of thing which power is

unrelated to. That's maybe the way he's thinking.

But the key here is I don't see any reason to adopt this view. And Duncan hasn't mentioned anything that his friend said that this is this is the reason. You know, when we provide explanations, explanations are meant to explain something that needs to be explained.

Here's a problem that needs to be solved. Oh, well, my explanation is adequate to solve the problem. Okay.

And this is what we do a lot as Christian apologists. Here's this problem. So what do you say? Well, it from the perspective of Christian worldview, here's how that all fits together.

And so it isn't a problem. I'm not sure what problem he's trying to solve, Duncan's friend, and why he thinks his solution is plausible. Maybe the solution that he suggests solves a problem for him.

But that doesn't mean it's plausible though. The best thing going, whatever, even reasonable. But in part of my point is it also creates a whole bunch of other problems for him that need to be resolved.

And finally, I would just say that I think the story of reality is revealed in the Bible has a coherent answer to why things are the way they are, what God is doing. And so maybe you could just go through that. Like, why don't we look at what the Bible says is happening and has happened and what God is doing.

And then maybe this will make a little more sense to you. And why is the biblical view inadequate to explain the way things are? Now, I have a sneaky suspicion here that this particular attack that Duncan's friend is taking is meant to shift the blame to God and off of humans. You know, it's God made me do it, so to speak, so the devil made me do it.

And that might be what's going on. So there's an advantage, oh, see, well, we live this way because God made us this way. If he made us this way, he can't hold us responsible for the way we are.

Maybe that's the motivation. But that's not the right, the look at the motivation is the refutation. The refutation is twofold.

And one is, well, we don't need to believe something for who which there is no good reason to believe he hasn't supplied that. And secondly, this creates all kinds of other problems that turn out to destroy the objection itself. I call this infanticide suicide for those who have read the tactics book.

All right, let's go to a question from C Cooper. And in hashtag STR ask a few weeks ago,

you addressed two reasons to worship God. He is worthy and it's good for us.

Can you explain the why of the second point? So why is it good for us? Well, I think that was your part of the answer. That was given. Do you want me to respond? It's a, okay, but let me invent your something.

You'll probably have the more substantive response. Anything is good for someone because they were designed to function in a certain way. And the thing that you do that's good for you means that it abats or helps or aids the proper functioning of that individual.

So gasoline is good for cars. Water is not good for internal combustion engines because they were not designed for that. Okay.

Maybe a steam locomotive, yes. And then gasoline does no good with a steam locomotive. But it all depends on the purpose and the design of the thing in question.

We were made by God to be in relationship with him and to honor him and enjoy him and classically characterized in the Westminster Confession first line. Basically the chief purpose of man is to something and glorify God, but enjoy him forever. Thank you, Amy.

She's holding off. I had a little brain freeze for a second there. To glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

And so if we do that which we were made to do, we are fulfilling our natures and the function that we were made to accomplish. And because we are not machines, but we are persons that enriches our souls to do the thing that we were made to do. Okay.

Which by the way, reminds me of something else and that is the contrast here between atheism and theism where Christopher Hitchens always offered this challenge, which I answer in Street's marks and you've also wrote a piece on it, I think that's on our website, that name one thing that a Christian can do that an atheist can't do that's good. And see what Hitchens has reduced morality to his mere behavior. And you don't need to believe in God to do these behaviors to which I answer yes, you're right.

You don't need to believe in God to do most of the behaviors that people say are good. But in the Christian understanding of reality, the sumum bonum, the greatest good is to glorify God. In fact, that's what Jesus said.

First commandment, love God with your whole heart, mind, soul and strength. Second commandment, love your neighbor. Okay.

An atheist can love his neighbor. He can do the second thing, but he can't do the first thing because he doesn't believe in God. So the point here is one's entire, the structure of one's entire moral universe is different, radically different if you're a theist compared

to an atheist.

But on our view, of course, we were made for doing good and being good, which entails first and foremost glorifying God. And when we do that, which we were made to do, our souls are enriched and we function better. It's good for us to put it simply.

That would be my first point also, Greg, that it was the purpose that we were made for. And that's where we flourish. That's where we're fulfilled.

That's where we functioned best. Also, we enjoy praising things. Who doesn't enjoy praising the things they love? This is the point that C.S. Lewis made that the fulfillment of your love is praise.

And that's how that's how you fulfill the love that you have for someone or something. You end up praising it. And that's the culmination of your love.

That in itself is enjoyable and good. And this is the enjoyment that we'll have with God forever. Now, I, one other thing, I think those are the most important things, but there's one other thing I think happens also.

When we are worshiping God and we're enjoying him and we're seeing him as he is, that enables us to say no to sin. Because the thing about sin is that it deceives us into thinking that the good thing to do is to do this sin. I'll be better off if I do this sin.

But if you are fulfilled with the glory of God and enjoying God, sin doesn't look as good. It breaks that power. It helps you to see that it's worthless and it's a less good thing to do.

And to vacuous, unsatisfying, ultimately. Yeah. So I think praise also helps that.

But I think those other things are the main reasons. Anything else to add before I close this off, Greg? Oh, you did a great job. Well, thank you, Duncan and C. Cooper.

We appreciate hearing from you. If you have a question, send it on Twitter with the hashtag STRS or you can go through our website at [str.org](http://str.org). Just look for the hashtag STRS podcast page and you'll find a link there so that you can send us your question. All right, this is Amy Hall and Greg Coker for Stand to Reason.

Thanks for listening.