

## WHY DOES GOD ALLOW EVIL?

Tuesday's horrific mass murder of innocent Americans leaves all rational people shocked, angry, grief-stricken, and numb. Our tears flow freely and our hearts carry a deep ache. How could this happen in our nation?

This week as mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbors, and co-workers begin to share their stories, this tragedy will become even more personal. As this tragedy becomes more personal, it will become more painful. As our pain deepens, so will the questions. Why does God allow evil to happen? If God is so great, and so good, why does he allow human beings to hurt each other?

The answer lies in both our greatest blessing and our worst curse: our capacity to make choices. God has given us a free will. Made in God's image, he has given us the freedom to decide how we will act and the ability to make moral choices. This is one asset that sets us apart from animals, but it also is the source of so much pain in our world. People, and that includes all of us, often make selfish, self-centered, and evil choices. Whenever that happens, people get hurt. Sin is ultimately selfishness. I want to do what I want, not what God tells me to do. Unfortunately, sin always hurts others, not just ourselves.

God could have eliminated all evil from our world by simply removing our ability to choose it. He could have made us puppets, or marionettes on strings that he pulls. By taking away our ability to choose it, evil would vanish. But God doesn't want us to be puppets. He wants to be loved and obeyed by creatures who voluntarily choose to do so. Love is not genuine if there is no other option.

Yes, God could have kept the terrorists from completing their suicidal missions by removing their ability to choose their own will instead of his. But to be fair, God would also have to do that to all of us. You and I are not terrorists, but we do harm and hurt others with our own selfish decisions and actions.

You may hear misguided minds say "This must have been God's will." Nonsense!! In a world of free choices, God's will is rarely done! Doing our own will is much more common. Don't blame God for this tragedy. Blame people who ignored what God has told us to do: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

In heaven, God's will is done perfectly. That's why there is no sorrow, pain, or evil there. But this is earth, a fallen, imperfect place. We must *choose* to do God's will everyday. It isn't automatic. This is why Jesus told us to pray "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

The Bible tells us the root of evil: "This is the crisis we're in: God's light streamed into the world, but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness...because they were not really interested in pleasing God." (John 3:19 Message Translation) We're far more interested in pleasing ourselves.

There are many other questions that race through our minds during dark days. But the answers will not come from pollsters, pundits, or politicians. We

must look to God and his Word. We must humble ourselves and admit that each of us often choose to ignore what God wants us to do.

No doubt this weekend houses of worship across America will be packed. In a crisis we cry out for a connection with our Creator. This is a deep-seated, universal urge. The first words uttered by millions on Tuesday were "Oh God!" We were made for a relationship with God but he waits for us to choose Him. He is ready to comfort, guide, and direct us through our grief. My prayer is that you will attend a house of worship this weekend and reconnect with God. But it's your choice.