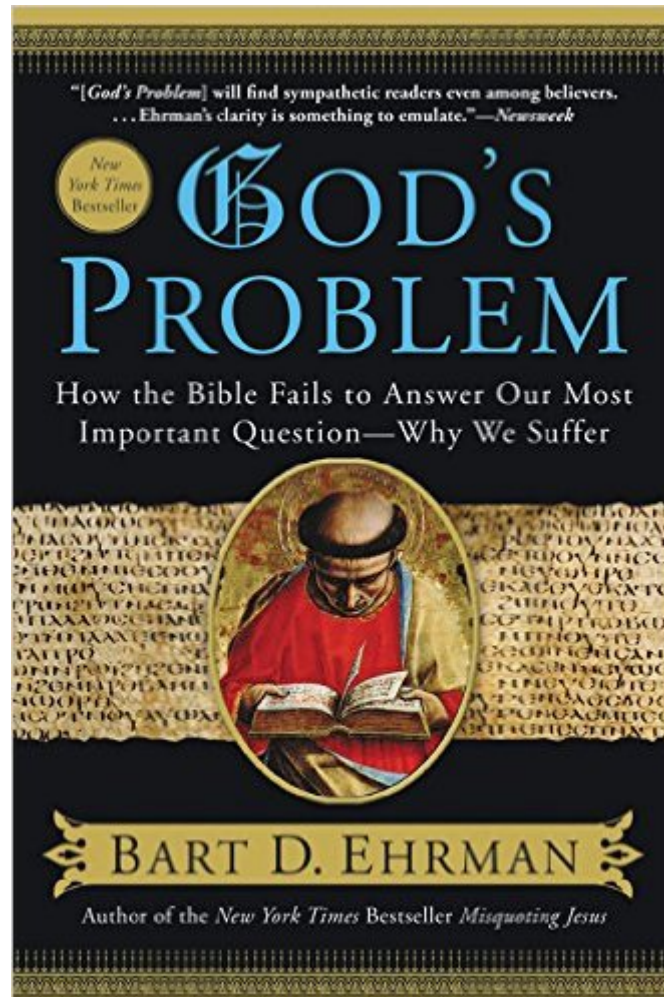


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# God's Problem: How The Bible Fails To Answer Our Most Important Question--Why We Suffer



## Synopsis

One Bible, Many Answers  
In *God's Problem*, the New York Times bestselling author of *Misquoting Jesus* challenges the contradictory biblical explanations for why an all-powerful God allows us to suffer.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I was subjected (through age 20) to more than my share of fundamentalist preaching, yet inquiry about the world and the value of evidence were stressed in our home. Ehrman's approach to the Bible is more to my liking than reiteration of a dogma I've already heard, documented by passages of scripture preselected to prove that certain view. His forte is presenting the rest of the story. In any Christian book store you will find shelves full of books discussing the problem of suffering, but you will not likely find another one like this one. In "God's Problem" Ehrman presents the Bible's version (and a few versions from various philosophers and email correspondents) of why God allows - even mandates - suffering. With a God who is all knowing, all powerful, yet completely loving and benevolent to His creation; why are there genocides, natural disasters, wars, epidemics, and such suffering involved in living and dying? Interestingly, believers are statistically no more exempt from disasters than society's many "cheaters." One only needs to look around to find that evil people often thrive and the righteous often suffer. How can this be? The problem bothered Ehrman continually for decades, as he relates in this very personal book. He had a minor epiphany during his seminary training when an honest analysis of the Bible caused him to stop taking the Bible so literally. But that wasn't the insight that caused him to lose his faith. It was the problem with suffering

that did it, although he admits "I went kicking and screaming". Scattered throughout the Bible are the justifications for suffering. The first (and main) rationale in the Old Testament is that suffering is God's punishment for sin, starting right out with Adam and Eve.

First, it must be said that this book is slightly mistitled. The problem is the subtitle, which tells us that this will be a book about "how the Bible fails to answer our most important question." Actually, the entire book is about exploring the various (and multifarious) answers the bible gives in answer to why suffering occurs. Instead, the subtitle should read something more like, "How the bible fails to RESOLVE our most important problem." That would be more accurate. Ehrman used to be a Christian, he tells us. He used to aspire to be in the ministry. What undid that, he says, is this very question; each time he tried to decipher why an almighty and all powerful god would allow suffering in the world, he came away deeply unsatisfied. It is a question that has been around for ages: from Leibniz to Lewis and Chesterton (or, if you are an atheist like myself, Hume and Flew). In the end, it is not that Ehrman cannot find answers in the bible to this question. There are many varied answers! Rather, none of them is satisfying to Ehrman. This book goes through all of the bible's (old and new testament) answers to the problem of suffering. Do we suffer as penalty for our sins? Do we suffer because all bad things somehow lead to good (ours or others)? Do we suffer simply because God wants to test our faith? Or because God will make things right in the afterlife? These answers - all of them in various parts of the bible - are explored. All of them, respectfully, are found wanting. Ehrman is not a Christian, but is far from exercising the beligerence and acerbity of Dawkins and Harris. He says in his preface, after noting that his wife is Christian and that the two of them attend church together, that he is not intending to "deconvert" anyone to his own agnosticism.

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