

How can a God of love...?

One of the big questions we're often asked as Christians is, "If God is a God of love why doesn't he stop (fill in the blank)?"

Love in the Big Picture

- First there was only love
- God created humans in his own likeness, with the ability to choose
- Humans chose rebellion – this is a temporary situation
- One day love will be restored for eternity – Only '**Faith, Hope and Love**' will remain forever

Recognise

What current worldviews come into play?

- **Individualism** – In our culture 'self' is raised to the point of 'me' being the idol I worship...
- **Moral relativism** – says moral judgments are true or false only relative to some particular standpoint
- **Short-term(ism)** - wanting things now; we can't wait. Instant gratification required!

Reveal

Individualism

We can affirm that we, as individuals, are unique.

But, we don't get to determine who we are...

We are made in God's image. As we read in Ephesians 2:10:

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Our role is not to refine who we are and what we do, but to discover it.

Our role is not to define what love is but to discover what it is, who it is that loves us; and how we, in turn, love others.

Moral relativism

If the individual is elevated to the pinnacle of power and importance it stands to reason that it's now the individual who has the responsibility to be their own arbitrator of what is true and moral!

What can we find that is positive in this worldview? That there are such things as morals, and they are good. However, it's not us who determines what they are!

Morals themselves are evidence of God's existence.

If we consider the worldview of **naturalism** (the belief that only natural laws and forces operate in the universe), this makes us wonder where morals come from - if everything can be reduced to natural laws and forces.

Being loving is also something we can all agree on as being good, but we're not the ones who define what it means to be loving!

Short-termism

One of the major cultural buzzwords of today is mindfulness - focusing on the present moment.

There is great value in this as it connects us with the 'now' in which we live.

Although we live in the 'now' we don't live just for the 'now'!

Reason

How do we reason for a healthy approach to this subject?

1 Corinthians 13 begins with the importance of love, then moves on to describe love and finishes with the permanence of love. But in the middle, we find this... verses 11 & 12,

“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

Do we have a skewed view of love, stemming from a childish understanding of it!

A child naturally thinks - selfishly and short-term - and they always think they're right!

They just don't have the capacity to look beyond the 'now' and see the bigger picture. Do we let them get away with it, or do we love them enough to correct them?

Our culture is childish and immature – our worldviews are selfish, short-term, and 'enlightened' (we think we know so much!)

Godly love, in contrast – puts others first, considers the big picture, delights in God's truth

If parents teach and train their children in these things, how much more does God?

“My child, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his child. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?”

(Hebrews 12:5b-7)

Reinforce

However, how can we reinforce this message?

It's a challenge, especially when we see bad things happening to good people!

But remember, *“For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully.”* (1 Corinthians 13:12)

We don't yet fully understand. We need to trust that Father knows best even if we think he's wrong!

He loves the human race so much that he instinctively steps in to put things right.

Which leads to an aspect of love that strikes at the core of what it means to love - **SACRIFICE**

Parents are prepared to sacrifice so much for their kids. As a perfect parent God is no different!

We see the ultimate display of unconditional love at the cross of Jesus – He gave his life so that we can live.

Remember we live in a temporary period until the Kingdom of God fully comes on earth.

We don't completely understand now how some things are 'loving' – one day we will

But for now - trust God and live by faith!