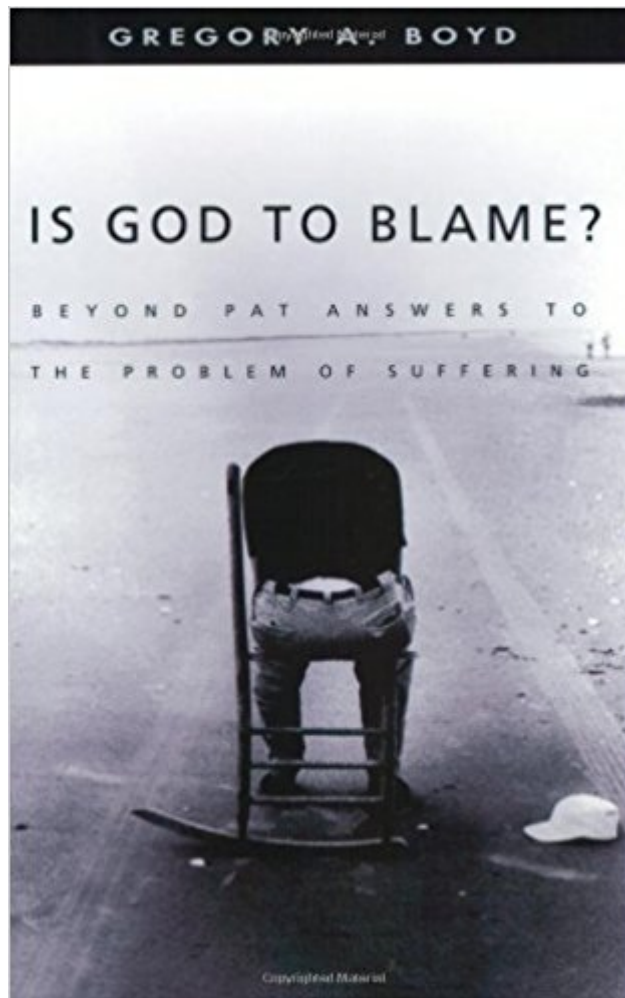




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# Is God To Blame? Moving Beyond Pat Answers To The Problem Of Suffering



## Synopsis

Is God to blame? This is often the question that comes to mind when we confront real suffering in our own lives or in the lives of those we love. Pastor Gregory A. Boyd helps us deal with this question honestly and biblically, while avoiding glib answers. Writing for ordinary Christians, Boyd wrestles with a variety of answers that have been offered by theologians and pastors in the past. He finds that a fully Christian approach must keep the person and work of Jesus Christ at the very center of what we say about human suffering and God's place in it. Yet this is often just what is missing and what makes so much talk about the subject seem inadequate and at times even misleading. What comes through in *Is God to Blame?* is a hopeful picture of a sovereign God who is relentlessly opposed to evil, who knows our sufferings and who can be trusted to bring us through them to renewed life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Beginning with the story of Melanie, overwhelmed by the struggle to accept her baby's death as part of God's perfect plan, Boyd challenges Christians to rethink their assumptions about God and suffering, guided by the principle that "amidst the vast sea of things we cannot know, we can know that God looks like Jesus Christ." Boyd, pastoral theologian and author of *Letters from a Skeptic* and *God at War*, has attracted controversy in evangelical circles by questioning traditional doctrines of divine sovereignty-the idea that God is in total control of what happens in the universe, assigning good and bad events to human lives in accordance with a wise, if inscrutable, plan. Boyd argues forcefully that, for Christians, the deepest revelation of God's character has to be the cross of Christ,

where God's glory is revealed not as compelling power but as sacrificial love. The book draws on a wide range of biblical material, including the Book of Job, accounts of answered prayer and Jesus' response to human suffering. All of these passages show God contending with a semi-independent creation that often resists the divine will. Thus the mystery of suffering resides not in God's inscrutable will or a possible "dark streak" in God's character, but in the complexity of a universe where freedom and risk are realities that even God must experience. Always compassionate, sometimes cantankerous and capturing biblical concepts with memorable clarity, this challenging book should be a valued resource for pastors, counselors, support groups and individual study. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Boyd argues forcefully that, for Christians, the deepest revelation of God's character has to be the cross of Christ, where God's glory is revealed not as compelling power but as sacrificial love. . . . For Boyd, the mystery of suffering resides not in God's inscrutable will or a possible 'dark streak' in God's character, but in the complexity of a universe where freedom and risk are realities that even God must experience. Always compassionate, sometimes cantankerous, and capturing biblical concepts with memorable clarity, this challenging book should be a valued resource for pastors, counselors, support groups, and individual study." (Publishers Weekly (starred review) August 25, 2003)"Greg Boyd addresses what may be the single most asked question among skeptics and seekers. Many without Christ are still waiting for us to respond with an intelligent answer. Greg provides an apologetic that actually makes sense about an issue that really matters!" (Erwin Raphael McManus, Lead Pastor, Mosaic, Los Angeles)"In this new book from the pen of pastor-theologian Greg Boyd, we discover an answer to one of life's most difficult questions: If God is good, why do bad things happen? Boyd advances a radical notion: human history is a battle between God and Satan. We are part of this struggle, and what the future holds is (in part) up to us. Things are not all fixed from eternity. Agree or disagree, Boyd makes Christian faith exciting. I recommend this book to thoughtful Christians everywhere." (Alan G. Padgett, Professor of Systematic Theology, Luther Seminary)"In this stimulating work, Gregory Boyd shows how an incarnational theology focuses on God's action in Jesus Christ as the source for our knowledge of God. In Jesus we see what God does for us, how God loves us, how God feels for us and how God rescues creatures and creation. This work restores an ancient view of Christianity that emphasizes the freedom we have to enter into a joyous relationship with God--a worldview of hope for all of humanity." (Robert Webber, Myers Professor of Ministry, Northern Seminary, Lombard, Illinois)

Gregory Boyd has effectively tackled a number of theological challenges encountered by many Christian truth seekers as they seriously begin to study God's Word. Free will or election for salvation; free will in choosing good or evil at any juncture; ambiguity of life or answered and unanswered prayer; and even the purpose and value of prayer when considering a God who cannot change (or maybe not): these are just a few of the deep theological challenges to which this book will give new light for the reader, and, if like me, you the reader will be changed or effected in some meaningful way. My faith and my preparedness to share God's Word have been multiplied by the application of new perspective over old dogma. Without denegration of established theological positions, Boyd has provided scholarly clarity that will provide the reader with one "aha!" after another. Perhaps most importantly of all, Boyd's lessons on prayer and the factors affecting (effecting?) the results of the prayer's intended actions and the human relationship to God in prayer left me revitalized in my prayer life and added needed direction and intensity to the way I pray.

Boyd portrays a good Father that only has a good heart towards humanity. We live in a world where we all experience suffering more or less. What to make of this? Boyd hasn't an illusion about trying to answer every question out there - he underlines this in his book. We are limited in our understanding when it comes to the problem of evil and suffering. This approach is honest and helpful. In times of trouble, we can be assured that our heavenly Father only wills good things for us, in an imperfect and unjust world. That alone can be of great comfort while we try to navigate through life. Even when we face tragedies that leaves us comfortless.

This book reads like a non stop thriller. If you have listened to Boyd's sermons before then his writing style seems to replicate his speech: binding, well thought through, intellectually stimulating and high on adrenaline. It adresss an age old question that posessed human kind: How can an omnipotent, all loving an goid God permit the existrnce if evil? This problem is called the Theodicy-question. Boyd starts by bringing into question the so called "Blue Print" model of the mainstream theology: God is in control and wills everything, even the most brutal and cruel atrocities in the history of man kind. Boyd's view is that inhumane cruelties like that cannot be related to an all loving God at all. He pokes hiles into the Blue print midel and shows that it actually leads to a further crisis of faith for believers and needs to be questioned. So the question is, what is Boyd's alternative? Boyd brings into picture the existence of Evil. His view on the biblical view of evil is that it is threefold: The Freedom of choice of human agents The freedom of choice of spiritual beings The complexity and chaos of nature itself. Boyd states that evil needs to be analysed in

brought to insight for all to see. This is a fresh approach to the question of Theodicy. God is not responsible for evil in this world, but eventually takes responsibility for evil via the crucifixion of Jesus. Thus God did not plan for this in creating the universe, He responded to the brokenness by changing his mind and delivered mankind through his only Son Jesus. If mankind wonders what God is like, then we need not to search further than Jesus. In Jesus we encounter the full nature of God. But, like all approaches within Theodicy, Boyd's version also creates certain questions. Although He is right in showing the shortcomings of the Blue Print model, the question is if his alternative is really a better one? Boyd is of opinion that God cannot always prevent Evil from harming human beings even if He wills to. There are too many consequences that is too complex for human beings to understand. Boyd's opinion of scripture's detail on the function of prayer also creates a series of questions: it seems that the more people pray the stronger the army against evil forces and the more likely the chance that our prayers will be answered as successful. I have appreciation for his use of scripture through this, but it seems that Boyd is also losing perspective of how this will be understood by believers who are the innocent victims of violent crimes, of brutal senseless killings. How is God with these people and is God defenseless against their unslaughter and what does this say about God? Never the less, a very good read though. Worth reading an engaging with others on the question of Theodicy, which is relevant in our days.

This is the fourth book of Greg Boyd's that I have purchased this summer, and I have 3 more in my cart. There is a good reason for this. *Is God to Blame? - Beyond Pat Answers to the Problem of Suffering* is--I think--the layman's version of his book *Satan & the Problem of Evil*. In it, we find that Dr. Boyd is very good at answering the toughest theological questions. He is dedicated to the tough questions--something I greatly admire. In my own life, I aspire to be that kind of theologian and Boyd has become an inspiration to me. In *Is God to Blame?*, Boyd refutes the "blueprint theology" in which all things are considered to be part of God's divine predestined plan. However, the book is mainly focused on answering hard questions. Why is this happening to me? Why is there suffering? Why does God seem so arbitrary? Why are my prayers unanswered while others' are answered? Why do I suffer while others are blessed? Why do my prayers fail when the prayers of others come true? Does prayer even make a difference? You may think these questions cannot be answered--after all, they have been asked and pondered for thousands of years--but Boyd does an incredible job answering them. His answers are about as good as it gets. One thing I really respect about Boyd is how close he stays to Scripture. All of his points are backed by considerable Scriptural support. Another thing I respect about him is that he never settles for cliches or "pat answers" but always

faces the problems head on, considers their reality, and provides a solution that--though could never take away the pain--can satisfy the doubt and the intellectual frustration with God and life in general. I wish people like Woody Allen would read this book. The problems Boyd confronts in this book are relevant to all people, and his answers are incredibly sufficient and helpful. Reading this book has been a great encouragement to my walk with God and has been great fuel for my faith. I highly recommend it.

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