

**Why do
BAD THINGS**

**happen to
GOOD PEOPLE?**

Opening Prayer

A Collect for Guidance

**Heavenly Father, in you we live and move and have our being:
We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit,
that in all the cares and occupations of our life, we may not forget you,
but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Christians have historically believed that

God
is
All-Powerful

and

God
is
Good

But that doesn't seem to make sense, if

Bad Things

happen to

Good People

**This conflict,
called **The Problem of Evil**,
is something all Christians ponder
at some point in their lives.**

First Things

- The Problem of Evil is both a **head** and a **heart** issue. This truth influences how I respond when people share it.
- It involves both **Moral Evil** (human choice) and **Amoral Evil** (things beyond our control, e.g., natural disasters, illness).
- We are **scratching the surface** of a conversation that is centuries old.

Guidelines for Holy Conversation

“Be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger” (St. James)

**--Our goal is to truly hear each other’s thought and feelings
(rather than debate to be “right”)**

--We can learn by “trying on” another person’s understanding or experience

“Speak the truth in love” (St. Paul)

--Speak as we wish to be spoken to (It’s not what we say, it’s how we say it)

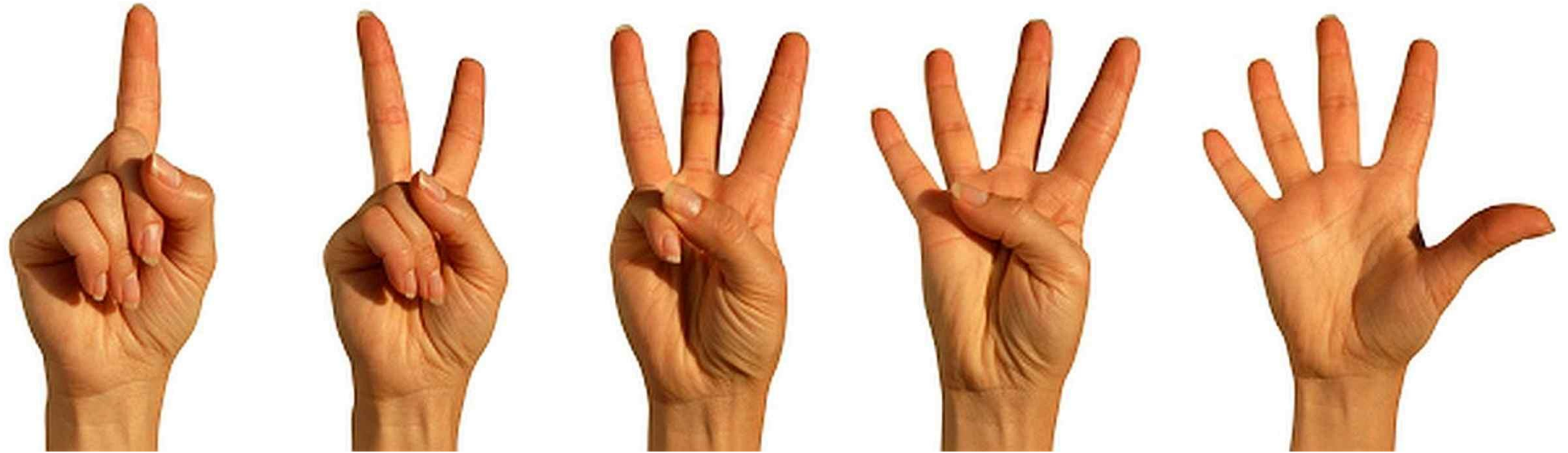
--Remember to respect the dignity of every human being (Baptismal promise)

“To everything there is a season...A time to speak...and withhold speech (Ecclesiastes)

--We don’t have to say what we’re not comfortable saying

--Try not to interrupt, or dominate the conversation

Five Ways to Deal with the Problem



Which, over the years, I have heard from Church members

1. God is **not** All-Powerful

~~God
is
All-Powerful~~

God
is
Good

Bad Things

happen to

Good People

How's That?

- There is an ongoing battle between Good and Evil in which God does not, for now, have complete control. God cannot stop bad things from happening to good people.
- This is similar to Christ's "self-emptying" in Philippians 2.
- This understanding is often connected with the idea of Free Will.



2. God is **not** Good

God
is
All-Powerful

Bad Things

happen to

Good People

~~God
is
Good~~

How's That?

- God can stop bad things from happening, since God is All-Powerful;

but

God **allows** bad things happen
because God isn't that interested in people,

or

God **makes** bad things happen
because God is cruel.



3. “Bad Things” aren’t Really Bad

God
is
All-Powerful

God
is
Good

Bad Things

happen to

Good People

How's That?

- Eventually, “everything happens for a reason”. (“It’s all part of God’s plan.”)
We just don’t understand why yet, so things seem bad.
- Buddhism: The Caterpillar and the Rug
- Hamlet: “There is no good or bad; thinking makes it so.”



4. There is **No God**

~~God
is
All-Powerful~~

~~God
is
Good~~

Bad Things

happen to

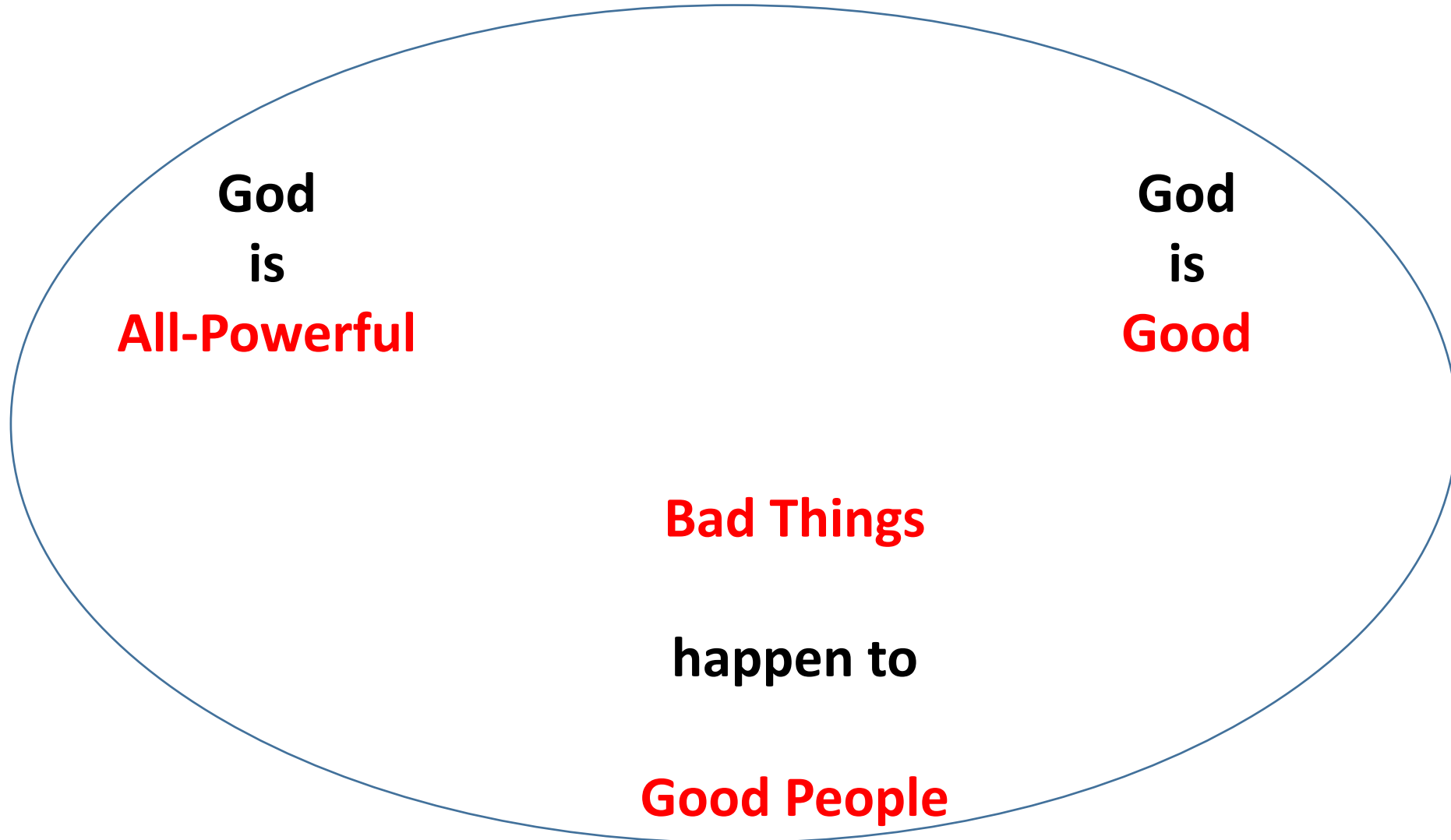
Good People

How's That?

- Since bad things happen to good people, it doesn't make sense to believe in an all-powerful, loving God.
- This view could lead one to Agnosticism, rather than Atheism.

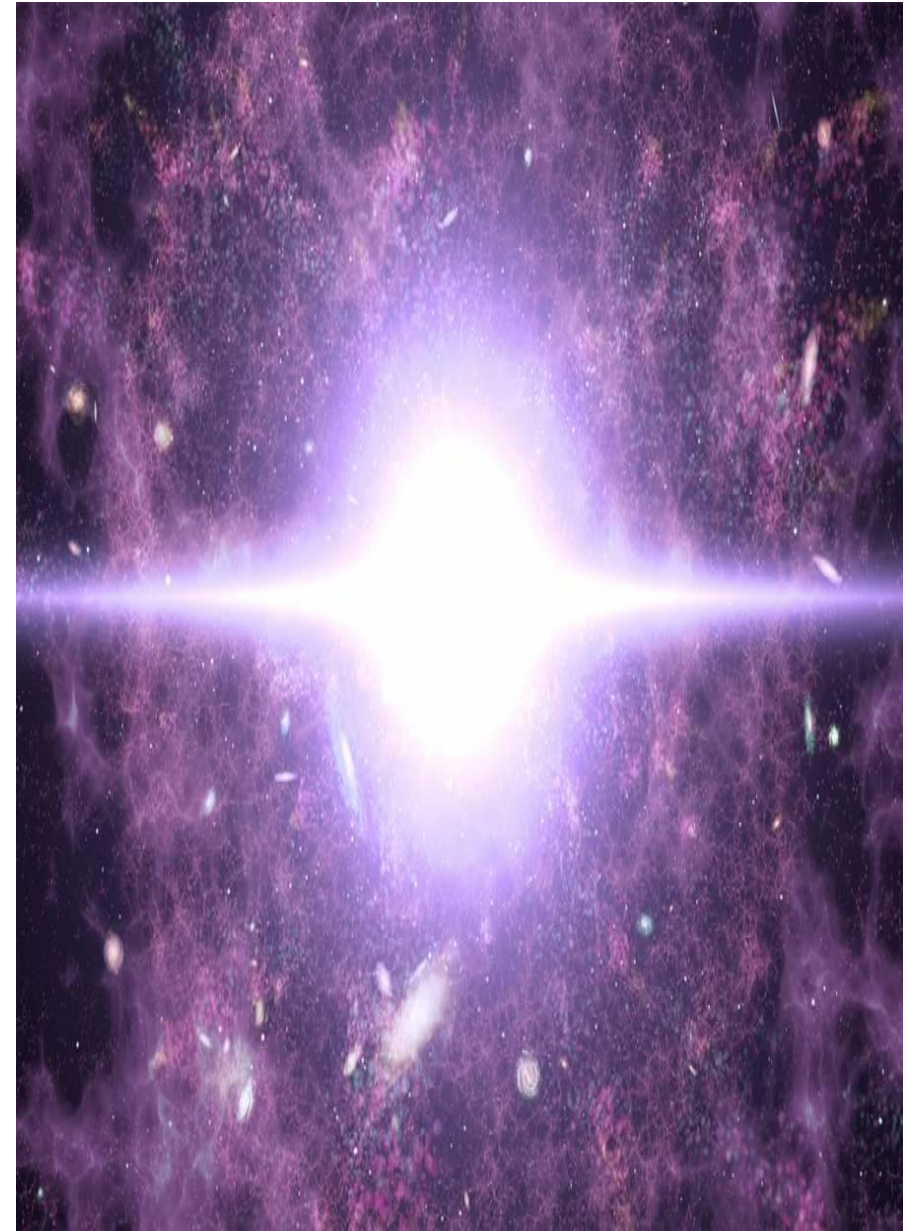


5. It's a **Holy Mystery**

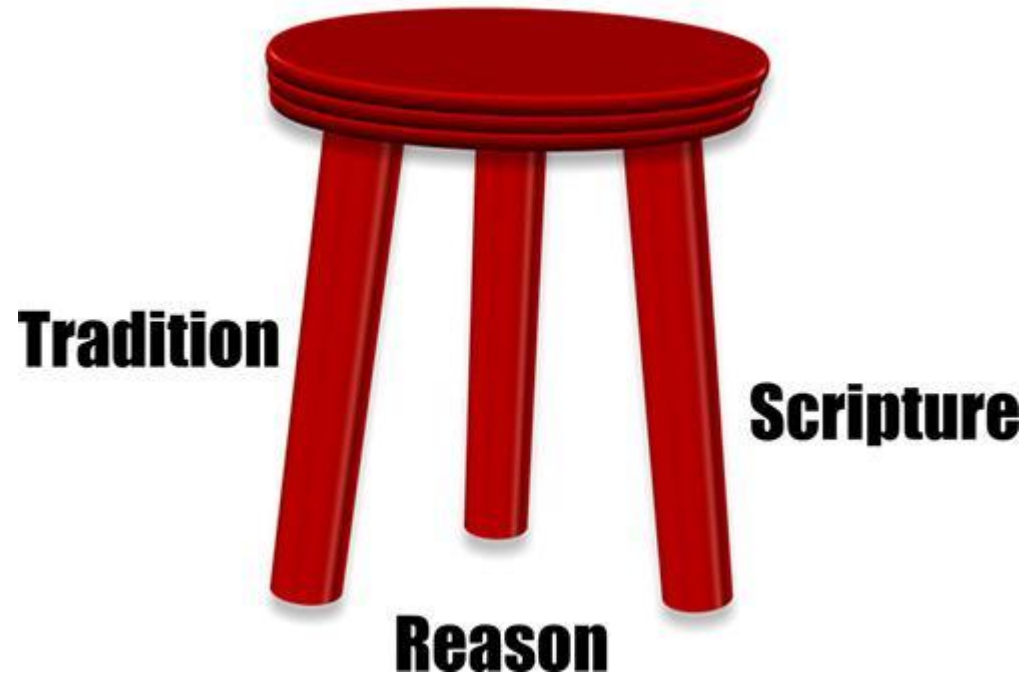


How's That?

- We simply admit that the mind of God is beyond our comprehension.
- Sometimes, but not always, understood as “Everything happens for a reason”.



How might **Episcopal** followers of Jesus consider The Problem of Evil?



Simply put

- **Scripture:** What does The Bible say about it?
- **Tradition:** What does The Church say about it?
- **Reason:** What makes sense to me? What has experience taught me?

The “Three-Legged Stool” seeks to avoid theological extremes:

- **Biblicism:** The Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it.
- **Traditionalism:** We’ve never done it that way before.
- **Rationalism:** If I can’t see it, I won’t believe it.

	LIMITED GOD	UNJUST GOD	EVIL IS ILLUSION	NO GOD	HOLY MYSTERY
SCRIPTURE <i>The Bible</i>	God is creator, authority, actor; but Satan, humans have some control	Rarely is God’s judgment questioned (Pss., Abraham, Job)	“I have heard” “Jesus wept”	God’s existence is not a question	Job Canticles 10, 19
TRADITION <i>The Church</i>	Creeds: Almighty, creator, eternal, judge Gen. Thanks: “creation, preservation”; Confession: “by what we have done, left undone”; Catechism: “image of God”	Creed: “For us,” “For our sake” Eucharist C: “Again and again”	Prayers of the People Confession	God’s existence is not a question (“We believe as we pray”)	Eucharist Prayer I: “A full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice...” Burial: “Help us to believe, in the midst of things we cannot understand...”
REASON <i>Our ability to reason</i> <i>Our personal experiences</i>	God’s apparent weakness	Why did Jesus, the Christ, come to teach, heal, and give his life?	Why did Jesus, the Christ, come to teach, heal, and give his life?	Complexity of the universe God Consciousness First Cause	Basic meaning of God? (“Higher Power”)

Questions?



A Question I've Been Asked to Ask

“From this conversation, one thing I'll walk away with is....”



Related Reading:

Kushner, H. *When Bad Things Happen To Good People.*

Lewis, C.S. *The Problem of Pain.*

Veith, R. *God, Where Are You? Suffering and Faith.*

Yancy, P. *Where Is God When It Hurts?*