

The Problem of Sin

DISCUSSION

1. What are the popularly viewed “big problems” facing the world today? List them out.

2. Now, what are the popular views for the sources or roots of those problems?

TACTICS

We begin the discussion talking about the problems of the world. Most people today seem to believe the world is not perfect, so let them begin there. For some it will be lack of concern about climate change. For others it will be injustice or inequality around the world. The point is for whatever problems they are concerned about, listen, learn, and lead them to talk about what they think is the ultimate *root* of the problem. Let's consider some of the popular notions for the roots of the problems.

THE COMMON ROOTS

Here are some commonly considered “roots” of the problems in the world today. You may think of others. For each of those commonly viewed roots of the problems of human existence, describe how this is a root of the problem, and how has the human race has tried to fix or address them.

1. Ignorance
 - a. Description: Ignorance of other cultures, of skills, training, health issues, climate change, etc.
 - b. Addressed by: by education, the arts and expression.

2. Inequalities in Opportunity
 - a. Description: inequalities of education, training, resources based upon race, gender, class. Oppression & poverty.
 - b. Addressed by: education, changing systems

3. Corrupt systems of Government or Education
 - a. Description: Unfair distribution of education based upon corrupt systems.
 - b. Addressed by: change the systems

4. Limitations of technology/science to Fix problems
 - a. Description: we still are ignorant of much of the natural world.
 - b. Addressed by: progress and advancement in science, technology,

5. Scarcity of resources
 - a. Description: Scarcity of energy resources (coal, oil, natural gas, etc.) and basic necessities (food, clean water, etc.)
 - b. Addressed by: redistribution of resources, changing the system.

6. Other: _____
 - a. Description:
 - b. Addressed by:

7. Other: _____
 - a. Description:
 - b. Addressed by:

AN ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS FOR AN ACCURATE PRESCRIPTION

For each of those root problems above, would you say there's a deeper root problem? Even the problems associated "natural disasters" would be greatly ameliorated if a certain deeper problem could really be addressed.

The Bible describes this problem as sin.

Colossians 3:5-8

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. (ESV)

Ephesians 2:1-3

2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (ESV)

2 Timothy 3:1-5

3 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. (ESV)

The point is this, for every single problem facing the world today, the deeper cause is not something external to humanity, but internal. It is an inherent greed, selfishness, egocentrism. It's pride, anger, abuse, and an unwillingness—even incapability—to change. What the Bible calls sin.

Furthermore, notice that each of these issues can be addressed by philanthropy or charity. The Bible's version of this (for it is different than those two) is radically generous Christian love. Once again showing that to the degree that humans within those problems and systems change, the more those problems are addressed.

People commonly point out an a notable exception to this include things like "natural disasters." There include tsunamis, drought, famine, earthquakes, fires, disease, etc. But even if we grant that as an exception, three things can be said.

1. What we call a problem is actually vital, such as forest fires which clear the ground of dying or dead brush and plant life.
2. What we call a problem such as earthquakes, would be incredibly alleviated if humans rallied to the needs of those before and after such disasters. For example, shoddy construction of buildings which set up people for greater problems before earthquakes. And corrupt people who make it hard to get relief to earthquake victims.
3. The Christian view of the world has a coherent, consistent, and dare I say, compelling source for the brokenness of the world: human sin. The Bible teaches that when Adam & Eve sinned, that sin corrupted the very fabric of the universe. Thus, we look at the devastation to human life wrought by earthquakes and disease and deep inside believe these “just should not be” (cf. lesson 3 on Argument by Imagination for God’s existence).

TACTICS

Going back to tactics, here’s what I suggest:

1. Listen to people as they discuss whatever they see as problems facing humanity today.
2. Learn their views, understand their passions, and relate to their desire for a better world.
3. As they discuss addressing those problems, lead them to talk about the roots of those problems.
4. Use the 3 questions we’ve discussed so far to hear their thoughts and humbly yet intelligently offer a root for all the causes: something inside humanity. Ask them...
 - a. What do you mean by that?
 - b. How did you come to that conclusion?
 - c. Have you ever considered?

If, therefore, almost all of the problems facing humanity today can find their deepest sources internal to humanity in the form of sin, should we then not find a solution to this deep, internal problem even as we seek external solutions? Would not addressing this internal solution be even more pressing and powerful than external solutions? If the deepest problem is what the Bible calls “sin,” then we need a solution for sin... more on that next time.

Next week: Clues for God and Gospel