

Preparation for T309 Evil

“Evil” is the monthly theme for October 2013. All month on Sunday mornings we will be exploring evil. For more resources based on this month’s theme, see the October 2013 Journal on our church website: www.sanjoseuu.org.

Evil is a term so powerful that it needs to be reserved for the big stuff. Our minister defines evil as doing harm to life. Another person defines it as “willful blindness to the consequences of action.” This month we explore evil. How we define it. How we have experienced it. How we can stand against it.

1. Where have you experienced evil? Evil systems? Evil deeds?
2. When have you felt pain when hearing the stories of our world? Is that a signal of evil? Can pain be used as a Geiger counter for evil?
3. What have you done when you have been confronted with evil? What would you like to do? What do you plan to do?
4. Different religions define evil in various ways. See excerpts on the back from a Wikipedia article on Evil.¹ Which, if any, speaks to you? Define evil for yourself.
5. If we talk about evil, do we have to talk about “evil people”? What about evil acts? Evil systems? Evil intent?
6. Dualism is black-and-white thinking. Something is either one thing or another. Good and evil could be thought of as dualistic. Is there another way?
7. There is capacity for harm in all of us. What do we do about our shadow side?

¹ Evil.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 02 October 2013. Web. 03 October 2013. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evil>

Bahai Faith

The Bahai Faith asserts that evil is non-existent and that it is a concept for the lacking of good, just as cold is the state of no heat, darkness is the state of no light, forgetfulness the lacking of memory, ignorance the lacking of knowledge. All of these are states of lacking and have no real existence. Thus evil does not exist, and is relative to man.

Buddhism

The primal duality in Buddhism is between suffering and enlightenment, so the good vs. evil splitting has no direct analogue in it. One may infer however from the general teachings of the Buddha that the [catalogued causes](#) of suffering are what correspond in this belief system to *evil*.

Practically this can refer to 1) the three selfish emotions—desire, hate and delusion; and 2) to their expression in physical and verbal actions. See *ten unvirtuous actions in Buddhism*.

Specifically, *evil* means whatever harms or obstructs the causes for happiness in this life, a better rebirth, liberation from samsara, and the true and complete enlightenment of a buddha (samyaksambodhi).

Hinduism

In Hinduism the concept of [Dharma](#) or righteousness clearly divides the world into good and evil, and clearly explains that wars have to be waged sometimes to establish and protect Dharma, this war is called [Dharmayuddha](#). This division of good and evil is of major importance in both the Hindu epics of [Ramayana](#) and [Mahabharata](#). However, the main emphasis in Hinduism is on bad action, rather than bad people. The Hindu holy text, the [Bhagavad Gita](#), speaks of the balance of good and evil. When this balance goes off, divine incarnations come to help to restore this balance.

Islam

There is no concept of absolute evil in [Islam](#), as a fundamental universal principle that is independent from and equal with good in a [dualistic](#) sense. Within Islam, it is considered essential to believe that all comes from [Allah](#), whether it is perceived as good or bad by individuals; and things that are perceived as *evil* or *bad* are either natural events (natural disasters or illnesses) or caused by humanity's free will to disobey Allah's orders. See however [Iblis](#).

Judeo-Christian

Evil according to a Christian worldview is any action, thought or attitude that is contrary to the character of God. This is shown through the law given in both the Old and New Testament. There is no moral action given in the Bible that is contrary to God's character. Therefore evil in a Christian world view is contrasted by God's character. This evil shows itself through the natural desire to make oneself *god* of one's own life.

In [Judaism](#), evil is the result of forsaking God. ([Deuteronomy](#) 28:20) Judaism stresses obedience to God's laws...

In [Mormonism](#), mortal life is viewed as a test of faith, where one's choices are central to the Plan of Salvation. Evil is that which keeps one from discovering the nature of God. It is believed that one must choose not to be evil to return to God.

[Christian Science](#) believes that evil arises from a misunderstanding of the goodness of nature, which is understood as being inherently perfect if viewed from the correct (spiritual) perspective. Misunderstanding God's reality leads to incorrect choices, which are termed evil.