

God is Not in Control – Part 3

A few years ago a video surfaced that showed a stray wildebeest stalked and then captured by a group of lions. They dragged the helpless animal to the water where a hungry crocodile got into the act, hoping to steal a meal away. The wildebeest's tragic fate appeared decided – until, surprisingly, the herd of wildebeests returned, attacked the lions, and freed the captured wildebeest. I would never have believed the events that transpired if I had not seen that video.

What did the herd of wildebeests gain by returning to free one of its members? Each of them risked injury and perhaps even death. Yet, there they were, fighting together, and risking their own lives in their determination to save a fellow wildebeest.

What if humanity learned that God plays no role in our lives? He does not answer prayers. He does not intercede. He allows evil to defeat good. God either cannot or will not intervene, and through His absence, events play out on their own.

Although most religions would not accept this line of thinking, it may corroborate what most agnostics believe: God may or may not exist but even if He does, He does not play a discernible role in our lives.

I have addressed the concepts that God is in complete control of our lives and God selectively intervenes in our lives. However, in many ways, the concept that God has no role in our lives arguably makes the most sense.

How else can we explain the evil that inundates our world? How else can we explain the unanswered prayers, the tragedies, and the disappointments that plague our very existence? Even if Satan is culpable for the evil in the world, certainly God could prevent his actions.

Let us assume that God exists and that He created the entire universe – as most people in the world believe. A Being with that magnitude of power can intervene at any time. He can right the wrong, punish the evil, and liberate the world of disease, natural disasters, and war. Yet it certainly appears that He does not. God either cannot intervene or chooses not to intervene.

Nevertheless, there is goodness in the world. There is honesty, decency, sacrifice, and assistance. We see it and hear about it all the time. It is not mankind's most prevalent behavior but it exists

nonetheless. And it is often during those very periods of tragedy that goodness emerges. It appears after hurricanes and tornadoes when neighbors comb through wreckage seeking life still buried under the rubble; when a large man wades through hip-deep flood water carrying an old woman to safety; and at funerals when we pay respect to those who can no longer do anything for us, and to offer condolences to those who remain simply to comfort them and ease their grief.

An often-asked question is: Why is there evil? Perhaps the better question is: Why is there good? Why do people make any personal sacrifice for others in a world where there is so much injustice, misfortune, and suffering?

Like the wildebeests, perhaps we realize that we cannot rely on a miracle to rescue one of our own. That unless one of us makes some measure of sacrifice, the forces that oppose us will ultimately overwhelm us. That we are all responsible for each other, and that ultimately God is allowing us to decide our own fates. The wildebeests want to wish away the lions much like we want to pray away evil.

In addition, no one can make a sacrifice without there being something for which to sacrifice. One does not extend kindness or support without a reason. Ironically, the very tragic nature of our existence allows and even necessitates goodness to emerge. God's absence allows evil and tragedy to persist but it also allows us the opportunity to counter evil with goodness.

This observation might be the best explanation for God's apparent absence but it is disconcerting. My original question was: What if humanity learned that God plays no role in our lives? People may accept the premise that humanity will ultimately decide its own fate. They may even accept the argument that God's absence necessitates our interactions on behalf of others, which allows goodness to flourish. However, on a very personal level most of us would be disappointed in a Creator that created us and then never once intervened on our behalf during our lives, despite our frequent requests. In this scenario, we may acknowledge that He is God but most of us would not consider Him good.

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