

## Why? A Series in Theodicy Part 3: Order & Chaos (with Cory Hoogsteen)

### Discussion Guide – June 8, 2025

“Everything is meaningless,” says the Teacher, “completely meaningless!”

<sup>3</sup>What do people get for all their hard work under the sun? <sup>4</sup>Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes. <sup>5</sup>The sun rises and the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again. <sup>6</sup>The wind blows south, and then turns north. Around and around it goes, blowing in circles. <sup>7</sup>Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea. <sup>8</sup>Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content.

<sup>9</sup>History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new. <sup>10</sup>Sometimes people say, “Here is something new!” But actually it is old; nothing is ever truly new. <sup>11</sup>We don’t remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now. Eccl.

1:2-11

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>[a]</sup> <sup>2</sup>The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

<sup>3</sup>Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day. Gen. 1:1-5

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.” John 1:5

#### Quotes:

“Suffering and its frustrated meaninglessness, which was a symptom of the fall, is redeemed and given new utility in the development of the kingdom of God through a reciprocity of participation creating unity, empathy, love, and grace. In this way suffering itself is given purpose and is redeemed as useful for the kingdom.” — *Cory Hoogsteen*

“If a question has no solution, maybe we’re asking the wrong question.... Every worldview must reconcile this question of suffering. Atheism may solve the tension between omnipotence, benevolence, and human suffering, but it leaves us with Nihilism.... In Christianity, God suffers with us and offers redemption and resurrection through joining us in suffering.” John Lennox

“Do you remember the Shire, Mr. Frodo? It’ll be spring soon. And the orchards will be in blossom. And the birds will be nesting in the hazel thicket. And they’ll be sowing the summer barley in the lower fields... and eating the first of the strawberries with cream. Do you remember the taste of strawberries?” – Samwise Gamgee to Frodo

#### Discussion Questions

1. How have you experienced a shift from “order” to “chaos” in your life, and what helped you begin to rebuild meaning?
2. What role do hope and memory (like Sam’s remembrance of the Shire) play in enduring seasons of darkness?
3. Can we learn to hold both chaos and order in tension, or do we instinctively prefer one over the other? Why might this be?
4. How do you relate to the imagery of Sam remembering the Shire? What “taste of strawberries” moments help you hold on to hope when everything feels disoriented?
5. What does it mean to you that God “sets boundaries” in creation? How does that metaphor help us think about our limits and the presence of chaos?
6. Cory said that trauma can dismantle our previously held sense of the world. Have you ever had to reconstruct your faith or worldview after a painful experience? What helped—or hindered—that process?