

Answers To Tough Questions

Matthew 7:7-8

The other day I got all excited thinking about our first time together and how to open up discussion about the tough questions of life. I thought I'd get online and do a little research. To my horror I discovered hundreds of questions about all types of topics relating to religion and Christianity.

It has been said, "Hurting people everywhere need God." Many are open to considering Him, but they often have questions they want answered before they are willing to accept Christ. I too had many questions in my teenage years and was never afraid to try and seek answers.

I was an avid reader of Christian books as I sought for answers. I asked questions of Christian leaders and friends. This helped me grapple with the issues of life and I found some satisfaction in their answers. Later, as I entered Bible College, I continued to study and research answers to tough questions. I was not afraid to ask crucial questions that seemed to be more of an atheistic attack on God, but it wasn't as I figured God was big enough to handle any of my questions.

I discovered that so much in life is a constant change and Scientists are discovering new things all the time. So I realized that in order to understand someone like God, you have to develop a close relationship with him. I turned to God in faith and trusted in Jesus Christ his Son and found that he accepted me in spite of my sometimes relentless questions.

After trusting Christ as Savior, I still had questions. Today, as I am privileged to encounter inquisitive people, much of my approach is derived from my own research and discussions.

But How do you deal with questions and objections to faith that your friends may pose?

This week, I read an article by Rusty Right, who

cautions, *"Listen to all questions but understand that some questions may be intellectual smokescreens". He continues, "Once a Georgia Tech philosophy professor peppered me with questions, which I answered as best I could. Then I asked him, "If I could answer all your questions to your satisfaction, would you put your life in Jesus' hands?" His reply: "[Expletive] no!"*

Remember, the Bible says, *"Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn't really know very much"* (1 Corinthians 8:2). I don't presume to have all the answers to every concern you will encounter in life, but here are some short responses that might be useful.

1. Why is there Evil and Suffering?

Sigmund Freud called religion an illusion humans invent to satisfy their security needs. To him, a benevolent, all-powerful God seemed incongruent with natural disasters and human evil. So why do we have evil and suffering?

The answer is that all "suffering" goes back to the beginning, when God gave Adam & Eve a free choice. Since then mankind has the free choice to live as God asks or like Adam, choose to do our own will. God, though sovereign, gave us this freedom to follow Him or to disobey Him. This response does not answer all concerns (because God sometimes does intervene to stop evil) but rather suggests that the problem of evil is part of being human and we are our own worst enemy. We are the ones who hurt each other! We cannot blame God!

"Why evil" - needs a greater explanation than I can give here. I know the pain of suffering is an emotional barrier to belief. But Jesus understands suffering. He was scorned, beaten, and cruelly executed, carrying the guilt of mankind's rebellion against God (Isaiah 53:10). Jesus also healed people, both to ease their pain and also to give them hope for a better life in the future. When He returns he will remove the forces of evil and all suffering and pain will be no more.

When I see God, items on my long list of questions for Him will include topics like a painful and unwanted divorce, betrayal by trusted coworkers, and all sorts of disappointing human behavior and natural disasters. Yet

in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection I have seen enough to trust him when he says *"All things work together for good to those who [personally] love and trust God"* (Romans 8:28).

2. What about the Contradictions in the Bible?

a) Omission does not necessarily create contradiction. Luke, for example, writes of two angels at Jesus' tomb after the Resurrection (Luke 24:1-9). Matthew mentions "an angel" (Matthew 28:1-8). Is this a contradiction? If Matthew stated that *"only one angel was present,"* the accounts would be dissonant. As it stands, they can be harmonized. Differing accounts aren't necessarily contradictory. Matthew and Luke, for example, differ in their accounts of Jesus' birth. Luke records Joseph and Mary starting in Nazareth, traveling to Bethlehem (Jesus' birthplace), and returning to Nazareth (Luke 1:26-2:40). Matthew starts with Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, relates the family's journey to Egypt to escape King Herod's rage, and recounts their travel to Nazareth after Herod's death (Matthew 1:18-2:23). They compliment each other!

b) The Gospels never claim to be exhaustive records. Biographers must be selective. The accounts seem complementary, but not contradictory. Space precludes more complex examples here. But time and again, supposed biblical problems fade in light of logic, history, and archaeology. The Bible's track record under scrutiny argues for its trustworthiness.

3. What about those who Never Hear of Jesus?

God's perfect love and justice far exceeds our own. Whatever He decides will be loving and fair. A friend once told me that many asking this question seek a personal loophole, a way so they won't need to believe in Christ. C.S. Lewis in 'Mere Christianity' wrote, "If you are worried about the people outside [of Christianity], the most unreasonable and unwise thing you can do, is to remain outside yourself." If Christianity is true, the most logical behavior for someone concerned about those who have never heard the message of Jesus, would be to trust Christ and go tell them about Him.

4. How can Jesus be the Only Way to God?

Rusty Right says, "When I was in high school, a visiting

speaker, said how he had found Christ at Harvard. I respected his character and tact and listened intently. But I could not stomach Jesus' claim that *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me"* (John 14:6). Rusty writes that *"Two years later, my spiritual and intellectual journey had changed my view. The logic that drew me (reluctantly) to his position involves three questions: 1) If God exists, 2) could there be only one way to reach Him and 3) was that one way—Jesus Christ?"*

Why did I consider Jesus as a candidate for that possible one way? Because He claimed it. His plan of rescuing humans (*"by God's grace... through personal faith.. not by doing works to try and earn it,"* Ephesians 2: 8 -9) was distinct from those requiring works, as many other religions do. These two kinds of systems were mutually exclusive. Both could be false or either could be true, but both could not be true. **Was Jesus' plan true?** Historical evidence for His resurrection, fulfilled prophecy and deity, and the reliability of the New Testament, convinced me I could trust His words.

5. Isn't Christianity just a Psychological Crutch?

Bob Prall has often said, *"If Christianity is a psychological crutch, then Jesus Christ came because there was an epidemic of broken legs."* Christianity claims to meet real human needs such as those for forgiveness, love, identity, and self-acceptance. We might describe Jesus not as a crutch, but rather an iron lung, essential for life itself.

Christian faith and its benefits can be described in psychological terms, but that does not negate its validity. Evidence supports Christianity's truthfulness, so we would expect it to work in individual lives, as millions attest.

6. Is genuine Faith necessary to believe in Jesus Christ and what He requires?

We exercise faith every day. Few of us understand everything about electricity or aerodynamics, but we have evidence of their validity. Whenever we use electric lights or airplanes, we exercise faith—[not blind faith], but faith based on evidence. Christians act similarly. The evidence for Jesus is compelling, so we can trust Him on that basis. Without **FAITH** no one can believe in God! (Hebrews 11:6).

7. Does it matter What you believe as long as you're Sincere?

Rusty says, after discussing this, a respected psychologist told me, "I guess a person could be sincere in what he believed, but he could be sincerely wrong." In the 1960s, many women took the drug thalidomide sincerely believing it would ease their pregnancies—never suspecting it could cause severe birth defects.

Ultimately, faith is only as valid as its object. Jesus demonstrated by His life, death, and resurrection that He is a worthy object for faith.

8. Has Christianity or some Christians let you down?

You may have been turned off because many Christians haven't acted like Jesus. Maybe you are angry at God because of personal illness, a broken relationship, a loved one's death, or personal pain.

If your questions are genuine and sincere, God will provide a way for you to find answers. He will meet your needs. Jesus said, *"Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads. I will give you rest. Accept my words and learn from me. I am gentle and humble in spirit. And you will find rest for your souls"* (Matthew 11:28-29).

Years ago, "One of the Jewish teachers, zealous of religious law was standing there listening to Jesus. He realized that Jesus had answered the questions well, so he asked, *"Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"* Jesus replied, *"The most important commandment is this: 'The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength'"* (Mark 12:28-30).

I encourage you to start trusting Jesus today!

These notes are by Pastor Andy and Rusty Right. Much of Rusty Right's article first appeared in the March/April 2002 issue of Moody Magazine. © 2002 Rusty Wright.

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