

To The Cross Ministries

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# QUESTIONS THAT CONFRONT THE CHRISTIAN

As Christians we live in an increasingly secular world. There will inevitably arise certain questions that are posed to us. What are these questions? How can we respond to them?

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WHEN THEY DELIVER YOU OVER,  
DO NOT BE ANXIOUS HOW YOU  
ARE TO SPEAK OR WHAT YOU  
ARE TO SAY, FOR WHAT YOU  
ARE TO SAY WILL BE GIVEN TO  
YOU IN THAT HOUR.  
MATTHEW 10:19

A seven-week Bible study helping answer some  
of life's toughest questions



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## Week One: Questions on God's Existence and Creation

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)*

From the beginning pages of Scripture there is no attempt to prove the existence of God. Because it is through the existence of everything else, that we know there must be a God. Down through the halls of history mankind has developed various proofs both for, and against, God's existence. With the rise of science and secularism for the first time in human history the widespread assumption of society is not that God exists, but that He does not. How can we as Christians respond to this rampant atheism? Is there hope to turn the tide once again? Let us consider several common objections to the existence of God.

### Q #1: Why Should I Believe God is Real?

There is no proof of God's existence. I only believe in what I can see. If I cannot see, hear, or touch God, then why should I think He is real? What does it matter in my life?

*Romans 1:19-20*

*For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

What are God's invisible attributes? What about His eternal power and divine nature?

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**A: God reveals Himself through invisible attributes, which are no less real than the physical world around us.**

God's *invisible attributes* may include characteristics such as His love, beauty/design, morality, and judgment. Here Paul indicates that we cannot deny the power and nature of God. We may be able to turn a blind eye to other aspects of His Being, but not these two. The Bible teaches there are three avenues from which God's power comes. They are His Hand, His Name, and His Word.

All power is God's and is given by Him (1 Chron. 29:12). Jesus said He would go and sit at the right hand of power when He went to be with the Father (Luke 22:69). Jesus has the name that is above every other name. That's why the disciples used the name of Jesus to perform great miracles. That's why we are to pray in Jesus' name. The power of Jesus alone is enough to overcome the flesh (John 17:2). Lastly, the power of the Word of God is closely tied to His nature (Heb. 1:3). The Bible calls the gospel "the power of God unto salvation." And you might think, "That's ridiculous! Who could be saved from their sin by a mere word?" Oh wait, but God knew you'd say that! He says it's foolish to the world; it doesn't make sense in human terms. But to those that believe (that's a great phrase) to them that are being saved, it is the power of God. Let's explore this a little further.

*1 Corinthians 1:21*

*For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.*

*Psalm 14:1*

*The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good.*

Here we encounter a paradox of sorts. Which is more foolish? Belief in God, or saying there isn't a God?

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From the world's perspective belief in God, particularly a crucified God, is foolish and illogical. No amount of reasoning and proofs can validate the existence of God completely. The Almighty God cannot be put in a test tube. His existence must ultimately be accepted by faith. Although, there are certainly indications of His existence.

### Q #2: Does The Biblical Account of Creation Contradict Science?

The biblical account of creation was just the ancient way of explaining the formation of the world. We know better now. There is no need to believe in such childish fairytales anymore.

*Genesis 2:1-3*

*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.*

What do you think? Did God create the universe in seven literal days? Do theories of evolution take away from God's creative power?

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**A: One God created the world. He did so out of nothing, and in short order.**

Let us start with the crux of the question for that is what we are all interested in whether we guise it under another question or not. *Is the Bible completely inerrant and infallible in all that it wishes to convey?* To which I answer an unequivocal yes.

That bridges the further question, what does it wish to convey? At times it is *propositional statements* of truth: Jesus is Lord. At times it is *historical facts*: Jesus was raised from the dead. At times it is *summative information* regarding a particular event, rather than specific or scientific details. The tricky business is in determining which of these it wishes to convey in a particular passage. But that is the nature and the challenge of biblical interpretation. It would be easy to say we accept the Bible at face-value. But such an approach has led many to question their faith when confronted with the pressing scientific issues of our day.

What is needed then is commitment to the biblical context. So, in regard to the seven literal days issue, the context is to propose that one God created the world. He did so out of nothing. And mankind was created in His image. That is the *cultural* context of the Genesis account.

Considering the wider *biblical* context, we learn that Adam and Eve were real persons who faced very real consequences for their actions, which still affect us today. We must then throw out a general idea of evolution. But to immediately adopt an idea of seven days is equally problematic. For how can one distinguish a day prior to the creation of the sun and moon (day four)? The word for day in the Hebrew can simply mean an indefinite period of time. The Bible therefore cannot be said to give and definite answer on either side of the debate. Therefore, I would say you can be a genuine Christian and hold to either position. Because the Bible is not as dogmatic about it as we might assume, neither should we be.

With that being said I am under the conviction that God created the heavens and the earth and everything that is in them in short, successive order. He did not need evolution as the means of creation. But created plants and people and planets with an appearance of age. Adam and Eve were not babies at creation. Stars millions of light

years away could be seen because God established the world as working system. Out of nothing. Science and the opinion of man may question such a reality, but it will never prove it impossible. Unless time travel is invented!

**Q #3: Even If God Created the World, He Doesn't Care About It Anymore, right?**

Ok, I admit God may have created the world, but maybe He spun it into existence and now leaves it to its own devices. Why should I think God cares about this cold world?

*Colossians 1:15-17*

*He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

In grade school we are taught of a nuclear force, that supposedly holds all the atoms and molecules together. Scientists and mathematicians are left clueless as to what can cause such a force. For science can only go so far. Does this Scripture give us any indication as to what really holds the universe together?

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**A: God is not just the Creator, but also He is the Sustainer of the world.**

Just as God created the world, so too does He sustain it (1 Chron. 16:30). My mother used to send my brothers and I outside or upstairs to play while she was making dinner. And she would always say, "Y'all have fun" I think she just wanted to get us out of her hair so she could have some peace. I don't blame her; we were quite the handful. But that is the perspective some people have on God. They think He created this world, and then said, "Y'all have fun!" But God has not abandoned this world to its own devices. He is still intimately involved in His creation.

You see, the Bible teaches that not only did God create the stars, and the oceans, and the mountains, but He also created you personally. David says, “you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psa. 139:13-14) Just as He will sustain the world, so He will sustain you. The Bible says He will “will sustain you to the end...” (1 Cor. 1:8). God is the reason. He is the answer to that great question of the human heart: “Why are we here? Where are we going?” He is still actively involved in His creation, holding it together. Even the atoms and molecules of the nails that would one day pierce Him on the cross were sustained by Him. Such is God’s care for His creation. And His attempt to reach us no matter the cost.

### Prayer and Follow Up

- Suggested response for Q#1: Do not try to win an argument about God’s existence with the other person. Pray that God would give them faith to believe in His existence.
- Suggested response for Q#2: We need to commit ourselves to biblical interpretation, using both the biblical and cultural context to determine if the Bible is presenting propositional, historical, or summative truth.
- Suggested response for Q#3: Thank God that His work did not stop at creation. Praise Him for the beauty we see around us, and His sustaining power, not just in the world, but over our personal lives as well.

## Week Two: Questions on Evil

*I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 4:1-3)*

It is customary at most Christian universities for all students to take an introductory-level theology course, which usually deals with the problem of evil. But you do not have to be a theologian to see that evil is all around us. The Bible says, “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.” (2 Th. 2:7) This evil and suffering brings with it many questions. Some of which we will look at in this study.

Now, some argue that God wishes to do something about our problems, but He is unable. Or others say that God is able, but not willing. Whatever the case, the problems of evil weigh heavy on the heart of mankind. As the writer said in Ecclesiastes, there is none to comfort us. But I don’t want you to look at anyone else, or even me, for the answers. I want to look to the Bible for the solution to the question of evil.

### **Q#1: Why Is There So Much Evil and Suffering in the World?**

Why do children die from cancer? Why are families fractured and broken? Why must there be famine, natural disasters, war, and disease? If there is a God, why would He allow such a world?

*Luke 21:25-28*

*And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they*

*will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*

Typically, when confronted with the problem of evil within the world, Christians are quick to say we live in a fallen and sinful world, which is true. However, according to this passage, Jesus references natural evil, not so much as an obstacle caused by man's sin, but as an opportunity that should cause man to look for a Savior. What do you think this says about how we can respond to the natural evil in the world?

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**A: Evil was not a part of God's original design, and it will not be a part of His end plan.**

According to FEMA there are an average of 50 natural disasters per year in the United States alone. Compare this to the number of disasters that were reported in the entire world (63) in 1975. These words of Jesus ring true, as they always do. Thankfully, the death rate from these natural disasters has drastically declined since the 1920's, but it nonetheless still a very real problem.

Despite technology's best advancements and scientists' best effort, countless thousands are affected by these disasters, which are commonly referred to as "acts of God". Now, the Bible does teach that God is in control of nature (Isa. 45:7). But this world is not as He originally created it. Man's sin has had an effect on nature (Gen. 3:17-19).

We cannot reason it all out. Why do some have to deal with these things, while others do not? Jesus said we would be perplexed by it (v. 25). I can't explain it all to you. Except to say the pain and suffering caused by evil is real. However, not only was this not how God originally designed the world, but it is not how it will always be. Christians can be assured that God can work even in the midst of the storms. They certainly cannot overcome him. He has power over them. The disciples asked about

Jesus, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41) We can be sure that the problem of natural evil is in His hands and will one day be solved.

## Q#2: Why Do Other People Hurt Me Even When I Did Nothing Wrong?

Why do other people do things that are not right? Why do they lie and kill and cheat? Why must we endure such evil? If God loves us, wouldn't He spare innocent people from such suffering?

*Ecclesiastes 8:11-13*

*Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.*

According to this passage, why is man's heart bent towards evil? Why do you not think God immediately punishes evil and wrongdoing? (cf. 2 Peter 3:9)

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**A: There is moral evil only because people think they can get away with it. One day God will bring every action into judgment.**

When I speak of moral evil I am talking about the evil that exists across humanity. No matter where you go, men and women do things that are not right (Isa. 53:6). If I can say this, I actually believe this is one of the greatest proofs that God and Jesus exist. After all, what is evil? Augustine defined evil as essentially an infringement on what is good. In other words, for evil to exist there must be something that is inherently, inerrantly Good. Now, I look at my life, and I see that I am not completely good. I have moments of weakness and sin. I look out at other's lives and see the same

situation. That is because the problem is within us. It is a heart problem. Jesus said, "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." (Mark 7:21-23)

That's why no matter where you run you cannot escape the problem of moral evil. It is within others yes, but it is also within you. You are stuck with yourself! And if we are flawed, sinful beings then evil cannot be an infringement on our nature. It must be against Something that is truly holy or truly Good. And that is why I believe there must be a God.

God is against the evil that is in the world (Psa. 34:16). And He is the reason that the evil around us doesn't consume us and take away every good thing (2 Th. 2:6-7). So, that can explain, in part, the problem of moral evil.

### Q#3: Why Do I Do the Wrong Thing, Even When I Know the Right Thing?

Why can't I escape the temptations and addictions that entrap me? Why do I know the right way, but not take it? Am I too far-gone for God to save?

*Romans 7:15-20*

*For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.*

Here the Apostle Paul powerfully expresses how even a Christian can struggle with these questions. Do you ever struggle to do what you know you should do? Why do

you think that is according to this passage? What should our response be when someone comes to us with this problem?

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**A: Sin is the cause of personal evil. Deliverance is only found in devotion to Christ.**

No amount of naturalism or theories of evolution can reason this problem away. We actually have the capacity within ourselves to make choices that aren't good for us. We might know the good, right thing to do, but we are unable to carry it out. That is because God gives us a choice. There cannot be true sin without choice. There cannot be true love without a choice. God, in His sovereignty, allows us to choose to love Him. That is why there is evil in this life. We are to choose to love and serve God, not just do it because there is no other option.

But how do we get rid of the evil inside us? I try to get rid of it in many ways. I try to get rid of it through my eyes, but they see things they shouldn't see. Through my ears, but they hear things they shouldn't. Through my mouth, it says things it shouldn't say. So, you can't just say, "I'm done with it!" Chances are you have tried that before. We have to ask God to help us, and He will. Because He has the answers to the question of evil.

### Prayer and Follow Up

- Suggested response to Q#1: Try to help the other person see the good that can come even from natural evil. For example, people coming together to help each other. Personal testimonies of the comfort of God in our own life can also be an effective way to minister to people struggling with this question.
- Suggested response to Q#2: Try to explain how evil is a temporary occurrence. God's patience toward evil, (which also resides in us) is meant to prompt repentance.

- Suggested response to Q#3: Confess the sin and evil in our own lives. Thank God for the blessed position that is afforded to Christians who can walk in His power to overcome sin. Without God this would be impossible. Share this hope with an unbeliever.

## Week Three: Questions on Judgment

*The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. (Acts 17:31)*

Perhaps a person may admit there is a God who has created the world. However, they do not feel that God will judge the world. Such people have generally adopted a deviant and sinful lifestyle. To say they are only in the secular world would be a gross exaggeration. For many progressive churches have such souls in the pews and even in the pulpits! They deny the reality of God's judgment.

But there must be a judgement. Otherwise, God would not be truly holy. Just as if we were to break a state or federal law and have to stand before a judge, so in the spiritual world it is no different. Except this time, it is not others who are the judge, or even ourselves, but it is God who is the Judge. The Bible says, "Mankind will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth." (Psa. 58:11) Not one person here will escape the judgement of God. It says, "all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law." (Rom. 2:12). What are the questions that this judgment might raise?

### Q #1: Isn't Good, Good Enough?

I live a moral life. I try my best. My good outweighs my bad. Why wouldn't God except that?

*Acts 17:31*

*The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*

According to this passage who does God judge the world by? How does God prove that Jesus is the standard by which mankind will be judged?

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**A: Even if your good outweighs your bad that does not mean you are right before God. Because in God there is NO bad.**

Judgement Day. We hear the term thrown around nowadays. It is a biblical principle. On this day people will give an account for everything they have done (Ecc. 12:14; Matt. 12:36). The Bible teaches that right now our sinfulness and our stubbornness are being weighed in God's great scales (Rom. 2:5). It makes no difference who you are or what you have done to cover it up. Let me tell you, I have plenty to try to hide. But not one sin will evade His gaze. And even the most near-perfect person will be measured against Jesus.

There is the certainty of such judgment. "For the Lord shall judge his people" (Deu. 32:36, KJV). "Behold, the Judge is standing at the door." (Jam. 5:9) "They will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." (1 Pet. 4:5)

I have been called to jury duty multiple times. Two times while I have been at college. And the process of judgment in that Day will not be unlike a modern trial. Just as you might be called before the court, so you are raised from the dead. Just as you stand before the judge, so you will have to stand before God and try to defend yourself (Heb. 4:13). Will you know what to say? Do you have a defense lined out? Will it stand against God?

Unless we let Christ stand in our place, we will be guilty. Praise God, He is willing to do that. The cross proves that. Jesus took our judgement upon Himself. It is His love that will save us from God's righteous wrath (1 Jn. 4:15-17). Jesus wasn't just good, He was perfect. That is what God requires.

## Q #2: If God Made Me This Way, Why Does He Judge Me?

I was born this way. God would not give me this desire if it was wrong.

### *Verse Reference*

*They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.*

God will judge not just our actions before others. But also, our secret behavior. When the Holy Spirit is working on the conscience of an unbeliever oftentimes, they will begin to put up excuses like the above question. How can we respond in a loving and truthful way?

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### **A: We are each born into sin. Desire and feelings are not a basis for moral action.**

We can include personal testimony the sins that Jesus has set us free from. In that we are honest with our struggles, setbacks, and sins. For no matter how much we might fool others, we know deep down we cannot fool ourselves. It's easy to lie to others, harder to lie to yourself, and impossible to lie to God. Paul said, "their consciences...bears witness." God has given each of us a conscience to tell us what is right and wrong. But when we go against our conscience time and time again it can become dull.

The Bible says our consciences are defiled. In other words, they are not pure and clean. In that case it is not a good guide. It's like trying to drive a truck through a muddy rainforest with the windshield wipers off. Not a good idea. We need to be cleansed. It is only Christ who can make our conscience new again (Heb. 9:14; 10:22). He does that when we let go of our secret self. We can't hold on to the bad and expect Christ to make

our life perfect (2 Tim. 2:11-13). We must surrender it over to Him. He shows us His true self. We can do the same for Him.

### Q #3: Does a Loving God Really Send People to Hell?

Isn't it quite sadistic to say God punishes people eternally in hell? Couldn't it be possible that He just ends their existence? Or in some way bars them from some of the blessings of heaven?

*Matthew 25:41, 44-46*

*Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*

Which group is sentenced to eternal punishment? What are some of their qualities?

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### **A: Hell was created for the Devil and fallen angels.**

Here we see those sent to hell are in many ways religious, they are even generous (to the right crowd). But they are not considerate of the misfortunate and more importantly of Christ. This prompts probably one of the most popular questions asked to the minister today is, "How could a loving God send anyone to Hell?" The answer is that Hell was not created for you and me. Jesus said hell was "prepared for the devil and his angels." This is the devil's fate (Rev. 20:10). But that does not excuse us: "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell... then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under

punishment until the day of judgment.” (2 Pet. 2:4,9). If we follow the Devil in this life, we can be sure we will follow him into the next as well.

But the reality of Hell does not change the reality of God's love. It is God's love that provides a way out and a Way into Heaven (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16). It is His love that nailed Jesus to the cross to pay the hell that you and I deserved. Because you see when Christ died on the cross, we can be sure that He took our rightful place in hell. He said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34) Hell is that place without God.

### Prayer and Follow Up

- Suggested response to Q#1: Try to explain how God is the only One who is truly good. And when we admit our own failures and shortcoming to Him Jesus takes our judgment on the cross.
- Suggested response to Q#2: Pray that God reveals our secret selves. He will do so one day. Best He do it now so that we can surrender it over to Christ. Be willing to share shortcomings with unbelievers (for rapport) and believers (for accountability).
- Suggested response to Q#3: This is a tough question. Ultimately, we may not understand God’s perfect plan in this. We are called on to trust His plan and to realize that the reality of Hell should prompt us to proper behavior and praise of Jesus for the salvation He extends to us.

## Week Four: Questions on Alternate Religions

*I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, Turn now every one of you from his evil way, and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and your fathers. (Jeremiah 35:15)*

Many people are looking for something to follow. Some follow the latest trends of the crowd. Others follow their own personal desires. Still, some follow the teaching and commands of various religions. Amidst the cry of these earthly voices, comes the call of a Heavenly Savior. Jesus gives an open invitation to follow Him: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Mark 8:34) Notice He says, "If anyone would..." The invitation is inclusive to all. No matter a person's background, religious heritage, financial situation, family history they are given an option to follow Jesus. Jesus does not exclude anyone from following Him.

However, He does make the call to discipleship exclusive. He says you will have to, "come after Me..." Not come after Buddha, or Confucius, or Mohammed. Not a sacrificial system. Not a priest. Not even a preacher. But Jesus. We are to follow Him alone. This means that there is no other option. Only Jesus. Despite Jesus' clear teaching, many in our modern world question whether alternate religions give equal access to God.

### Q #1: Is Jesus Really the Only Way to Heaven?

Do all religions lead to God? Isn't it intolerant to say Jesus is the only way? Don't all religions basically teach the same thing?

*John 17:3-5*

*And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished*

*the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*

What does it mean to know God through Jesus Christ? What work did Jesus do that made it possible for people to know God?

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**A: Only Christ can serve as the connection, cure, and copy we need.**

Imagine for a moment a man. This man is separated from all he has ever known and loved. A great chasm lays between him and his preferred destination. Perhaps he has sought with all his life and strength for a way around or a way over. But the chasm is too wide, the distance too far. There is only so much he can do. What this man needs is a bridge to cross the endless divide.

Indeed, what we need is not a bridge to cross, but a cross to bridge the eternal divide between God and man (can I get an amen?). It is into such a predicament that the work of Christ is most needed and most felt. Long had lost love languished lacking and looking for a link. Only Christ can provide such a link through His sinless life. His work as a connection.

But imagine if you will another man. This man is not stranded, but rather he is sick. His money cannot save him. His friends are powerless to stop the sickness surging through his body. He has survived one disease only to succumb to the next. He is incapable of rescuing himself. Indeed, the doctors have allotted his time. He perhaps has resigned himself to his fate. He has accepted his destiny as incorrigible and incurable. What this man needs is a medicine greater than any every known.

Indeed, what we need is a miracle greater than any ever known. Such salvation is not found in the progressive advancement of mankind—which seems to be more of a regression in recent years. Instead, it is found solely in the grace of God as it is applied to the life of the individual (Jer. 17:14). Christ demonstrated His power of sickness and sin

in His earthly ministry (Matt. 8:17). Our sin was dealt with by Christ. His work as a cure.

Imagine a third and final man. He is not stranded or sick, but he has strayed. Whatever his original intentions in life may or may not have been he has now become truly lost. He is stuck in a scramble for his own gratification. He serves no master but himself. And as a result, he is miserable. He has no flag to follow, no cause to consider, no path to pursue. What this man needs is a guide to navigate him through the deep and dark waters in which he finds himself.

Indeed, what we need is a pattern and plan in life that can propel us from an existence of misery to one of mission. My friend, in the work of Christ you and I find a carbon-copy of the person we are each called to be. His work is an example of forsaking one's own privileges in preference for others (Phil. 2:5-11).

Such is the powerful work of Christ as it plays out in the pages of the past and present. Only Christ can serve as the connection, cure, and copy that we need.

## Q #2: What Happens to People Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

Is it fair for God to condemn people who never have an opportunity to hear about Jesus? Can people be saved through general faith in God, or must it be faith in Jesus? Are there different levels to eternal punishment?

*Romans 10:13-15, 17*

*For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ...So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of*

*Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."*

Can people call on the name of the Lord without knowing the name of Jesus? How does this issue effect Christian evangelism and missions?

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**A: True faith only comes by hearing the word of Christ.**

Notice it also says Jonah was to go to Nineveh that great city and call out against it. The message of Christ is inherently counter-cultural. Acceptance. Tolerance. Compliance. At least when it comes to sinful practices, these words are foreign to the Bible (although they have become quite common to us). It is then a difficult thing to preach the gospel, because when done correctly it makes people upset. I cannot think of another profession that operates in such a way (except sports referees).

But the message we are to preach should warn people if they are to continue in their sin then they are against God and His goodness. That is understandably a difficult thing to hear. Just as it is challenging to say. In the OT when the people of Israel would go out against a nation they were first to offer peace to it (Deu. 20:10-11). But then, if that was rejected, there came the undeniable reality of judgment and desolation for those that persisted in their own way (Jer. 19:15; Ezk. 35:2). Some might reject the message. That is none of our concern. We are to tell them anyway (Mark 6:11).

I will say this, it is possible that God does not give us a clear answer on what will happen to those who do not hear the gospel, because it might dull our desire to share it with them. If everyone who doesn't hear the gospel is saved, why go to the ends of the earth to share it? We are to simply carry the message, like Jonah, to those who need it most.

Sometimes we may be commissioned to give God's message as a group (Judg. 20:8). Sometimes we may have to go it alone (1 Sam. 3:8). But the message we are to

preach is one of salvation (2 Tim. 4:17). It is a message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:20). It tells people that their fears can be alleviated and security can be found in Christ. It is a message of hope in an otherwise hopeless world (2 Cor. 4:1). It is the greatest privilege, the greatest honor, to have this message given through you. Let me say that firsthand. I do not know why God chooses to use such broken vessels. But we are to preach this wonderful message with as many as we can.

### Q #3: I Was Born in a Christian Family, Doesn't That Make Me a Christian?

Does going to church make me a Christian? Does being baptized? How can we tell who is a true Christian and who is not?

*Matthew 3:8-10*

*Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

Who is John the Baptist talking to here? What similarities do you see between this group and cultural Christians today.

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### **A: True faith produces repentance, not entitlement.**

There are plenty of people, and not too few Christians, who are content to coast. They are going nowhere fast. They are quite like a car set in neutral. Or a sailboat with no rudder. They are adrift in life. Content on seeing where the roads and the winds of life take them. My friend, if that is you, if you have no propulsion, no power, no purpose in life, you will go somewhere. You will go down. If you take a ball and place it at the top of hill. It will do down. But if you take that same ball and place it at the

bottom, it will not go up. Why? Because it is always easier to go down, than to go up. And if you and I are not careful and intentional in our Christian life we will go down.

Attitudes of entitlement will not do in the Christian faith. Relying on the faith of your parents or your nation is equivalent to presuming on the mercy of God. Just because God shows us mercy does not mean we are not to be repentant and faithful. In a similar way, just because we are born into a Christian setting that does not make us a Christian. It may help; but it does not remove the personal responsibility of being a Christian.

### Prayer and Follow Up

- Suggested response to Q#1: To challenge the other person to find another person like Christ. There is not any in all of human history. The only worthy response is faith and worship. Pray with the person to receive Christ if the opportunity presents itself.
- Suggested response to Q#2: It is OK to admit ignorance. God does not ask us to have all the answers. But to believe Him no matter what. In that, be faithful to share the gospel with as many people as you can.
- Suggested response to Q#1: Jesus does not desire coasting Christians, but rather committed ones. Do not allow "cultural" Christianity to get in the way of truly serving Him. Take time to pray He would open your eyes to areas where you may be lacking in your commitment to Him.

## Week Five: Questions on the Bible

*Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:23-25)*

Picture a prisoner held captive for some grievous error. He is told that if he solves a riddle he will be set free. He is given all eternity to solve this riddle. However, he is not told what the riddle is, much less given the answer. He is told if he finds the answer to this most pressing of questions he will be granted his freedom, for then and only then will he not be a danger to himself or to society. Should we assume this man will ever stumble across the riddle or its answer, despite the eternity allotted to him? Surely his heart would fail him out of fear and his hope leave him out of failure.

Picture now mankind trapped in a cell of perpetual frustration, confusion, and despair. We are told that one day we might solve the riddle, that we might find an answer to why it is we are in this perilous position. Will we find the riddle, much less the answer? There seems to be no cause for optimism. What is needed is a hint, an external encouragement. Yes, indeed that prisoner, indeed all of mankind is in need of a revelation. That is why we need the Bible.

### Q #1: Why Should I Believe the Bible is the Word of God?

Many people have come claiming to speak for God. Why should I believe the Bible is any different?

*Hebrews 4:12*

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

What does Scripture teach that the Word of God has the power to do? What do you think the writer of Hebrews is referring to when he says the word of God? The Old Testament? The New Testament? Jesus?

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**A: The Bible proves its divine origin by the change it brings in people's lives.**

Multiple times we see the Word of God being talked about as a sword. It is one of the most common analogies to describe the Bible. And there can be no doubt about it, the Bible has always been very divisive. Specifically, the words of Jesus. Some people want to burn this Book to ashes. Others have burned at the stake to defend it. Some look at it with dread and fear, while other look to it for inspiration and instruction. Whatever the case, it forces us to take a side and fight. To make a change.

Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Matt. 10:34) And if you want to read something that will really get you upset, then just read the words in red. The Bible says out of His mouth will come a sharp, two-edged sword (Rev 1:16). And He has always just presented two options. Follow Him or don't follow Him. That's it. (Mark 8:34-35)

The Bible is either right or it's wrong. There is no middle ground (see 2 Tim. 3:16-17 and 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Will you trust God's inspired Word? Either way it is going to cut you. If you accept it as the Truth, then it is going to change the way you live. If you don't it is always going to haunt you and your life will never be complete.

**Q #2: Does The Bible Contain Errors?**

Can the Bible really be trusted? If it contains historical and scientific errors, why should we trust its theology and teachings about God?

*Proverbs 30:5-6*

*Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.*

What are some of the common errors you have heard that the Bible has? If you haven't heard any maybe you need to spend more time out of the Christian bubble. How might we respond to the supposed errors? If there are mistakes where did they come from?

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**A: God's Word is inerrant and trustworthy.**

They say of the biblical narrative, "It is a myth, a hoax. Sorely lacking in evidential fact." Yet there has never been a people as so profound as ours, nor an age as adept, at producing myths and hoaxes. Then, and the very least and worst, the substitute the supposed biblical hoax for one of their own creation and choosing.

The Bible is a book all about faith. The difficult things to accept in the Bible must be accepted by faith. Does it not make sense that a Book about faith would give you chance to exercise that same faith? As you wrestle with the supposed errors of the Bible, study the Scriptures, and exercise your faith.

**Q #3: Does The Bible Contradict Itself?**

One Gospel says that another this. If the Gospel writers cannot agree with themselves, why should we hold to their teaching?

*Numbers 23:19*

*God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?*

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Common contradictions include: Who incited David to census Israel? 2 Samuel 24:1 says the Lord, while 1 Chronicles 21:1 says Satan. How did Judas die? Matthew 27:5 says he hanged himself, while Acts 1:18 says he fell and burst open. Sermon on the Mount location? Matthew 5:1 says a mountain, but Luke 6:17 says a "level place". Genealogy of Jesus? Matthew 1 and Luke 3 provide different lineages. Is salvation by faith or works? Romans 3:28 emphasizes faith alone, whereas James 2:24 says faith without works is dead. Group question here?

**A: God moved through men (using their individual characteristics) to men (considering their specific circumstances). Context clears contradictions.**

Providing a detailed explanation of each of these supposed contradictions is beyond the scope of this book. The general answer provided above can be a ground rule for dealing with these issues. We must always take into consideration the characteristics of the author and the setting of the audience. Bible commentaries on the Gospels are a good place to start in order to find relevant information.

### Prayer and Follow Up

- Suggested response to Q#1: Praise God for the life change brought about by the Scripture. When discussing this issue with the other person try to show how the Scripture changes us by faith.
- Suggested response to Q#2: Again, it can be helpful to confess the errors we have in our own lives and our need to rely on God in an everchanging and fallen world.
- Suggested response to Q#3: Study bible commentaries to help understand the context of the Bible. Commit to do the work necessary to understand the context of the author and audience.

## Week Six: Questions on Jesus

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)*

The Bible teaches that God loves each one of us. The deepest part of God's character is His love. The Bible goes as far to say, "God is love." (1 Jn 4:8) Not like the love we talk about, or see in movies or books today. That type of love changes with the tide. But God says, "I...love you with an everlasting love." (Jer. 31:3).

Well, if you love someone you must show it in some way. Words, such as those found in the Bible, only go so far. If you love someone, then that means you are willing to sacrifice—to give up—something in order to be with them. And God's Gift to us was His very own Son. It doesn't matter who you are, or what you've done, He loves you because of Jesus. The Bible says, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8)

But not only does God show us His love through the death of Jesus, but also through the resurrection. It is the central and core concept in Christianity. Because of this, the resurrection has been subject to many attacks and doubts.

### Q #1: Can You Prove the Resurrection of Jesus?

There are many theories to explain away the resurrection of Jesus (hallucination, myth, stolen body, swoon, wrong tomb). Doesn't one of these theories make more logical sense that saying Jesus was physically resurrected.

*Matthew 28:5-6*

*But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.*

Is there proof of the resurrection? Is such evidence “fool-proof?” What is the faith component to Jesus’ resurrection?

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**A: Only a true resurrection can account for the appearances of Christ after His death and the change that took place in the Apostles.**

In order to explain away Christ’s resurrection, critics must give an answer for several dilemmas. First, there is the empty tomb. Next there is the missing body. These are undeniable, permanent facts of history. Even the most critical skeptic of Jesus’ resurrection cannot deny these truths and they must attempt to explain them away. But there are, I believe, two greater evidences of Christ’s resurrection that I would like us to study further.

(1) The post-mortem appearances of Jesus. These appearances do not fit the pattern of hallucinations. Jesus appeared to many individuals over a period of time. These appearances give perhaps the most compelling conviction of the resurrection. (2) The post-resurrection actions of the disciples. Nothing can account for the transformation that took place in the life of the disciples except to say that Jesus really was resurrected. Peter went from denying Jesus, to dying for Him. The testimony and martyrdom of the early disciples gives undeniable evidence to the resurrection of Jesus.

**Q #2: Isn’t the Resurrection Just a Metaphor?**

This is asked by even some Christians. They allegorize much of the Bible including the resurrection of Jesus. To them it symbolizes how God takes the defeated parts of our lives and restores them to greater glory.

*1 Corinthians 15:13-17*

*But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and*

*your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*

What are some of the theological implications of Christ's bodily resurrection? What cores of the Christian faith would crumble if the resurrection was merely a metaphor?

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**A: Without a physical resurrection, all of Christian theology shuts down. It is either a physical resurrection, or none at all.**

(1) Vindication of Christ's message of forgiveness. By raising Christ from the dead God declared that Jesus had not died in vain. His death, as with His life, accomplished the purpose for which it was intended. This verified Jesus as the only true Son of God.

(2) Power available to live the Christian life. By raising Christ from the dead God demonstrated His power over sin and death. This power is available to us today through the Holy Spirit.

(3) Hope for eternal life. The resurrected body of Jesus is the first piece in the observable universe to be redeemed. He has given a glimpse into what the New Heavens and New Earth will be like.

### **Prayer and Follow Up**

- Suggested response to Q#1: We can rest in Christ's finished work through His crucifixion and resurrection. Encourage the person you are speaking with to not trust in their own goodness and works. Additional points of study can be seen in the lives of the early Christians. Their example can be an encouragement to us.
- Suggested response to Q#2: We are called to realize the resurrection is the fundamental truth of Christianity. It is what distinguishes it from every other

religion. It is something to be celebrated every day. Not just during special times of the year. When is the last time you have thanked God that you serve a living Savior?

- Additional prayer: Pray that God might give to us the same power that brought Christ to new life. That it might bring victory over sin and temptation in our own lives today.

## Week Seven: Questions on the Church

*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)*

Just as with the Scriptures, through the Church God chooses to speak to His people. There is essentially no way to communicate with someone except through your words or your body language. So it is with God, He communicates with us through His Word (the Bible) and through His Body (the Church). The Church's mission should be to take the Gospel to every person. Sadly, it often gets distracted and discouraged in this endeavor. There are, after all, bills that must be paid, attendance that must be taken, positions that must be filled. In all of this busyness the Church has, for the most part, forgotten its business: to preach the Gospel.

With such struggles the secular world has attacked the Church repeatedly down through the years. Sometimes, rightfully so. For it at times has been invaded by worldly influences and personas. What are some of the most common and problematic questions that the world brings to the Church? It is to these we now turn.

### Q #1: Isn't The Church Full of Hypocrites?

I've had a bad experience with the Church, why should I come back? The Church seems critical and prejudiced, is that really how Jesus would want it to be?

*Matthew 18:15-17*

*If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen*

*to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

Has your church ever practiced Church discipline during a service? If so, how did it go? If not, does it have a different means of accountability for Christians?

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**A: Precisely because it is so easy to be a hypocrite as a Christian is why we need the Church.**

Anyone who claims the church was perfect has not read their history books. Anyone who claims the church is perfect has not read their newspaper. But, perhaps the Church is so full of hypocrites because it is so lacking in Church discipline. Being a Christian involves being a disciple of Jesus, that is a disciplined one.

We must move away from a cheap Christianity. Bonhoeffer famously describes this cheap grace as: “the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.” It is not enough to simply explain the gospel to someone. It is not enough to simply give the opportunity to receive Christ. There must be intentional follow-up and connection to the local church. This can occur through Sunday school, small groups, discipleship classes, etc.

**Q #2: I Can Grow in My Relationship with God on My Own, Why Do I Need a Church?**

I get enough out of my quiet time, or discussing spiritual matters with my friends. Why do I need to be a member of a church? Or be baptized?

*Romans 1:9-12*

*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.*

Is this type of attitude common in our churches? Why or why not? What can we do to stir up this sense of encouragement?

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**A: The Church is the means of discipleship and growth for Christians.**

One way that we can dispel the assumption is through clearing up misconceptions about the Church. There are many such misconceptions. I've seen some Christians who see church as like *coffee*. The take in the morning right after they get up and gets them through a few hours but that's about it.

To others it can be compared to that modern marvel of greedy men: the *tollbooth*. No one likes going to one. But you must if you are to not get slowed down too much. If you don't want to get stuck in traffic. You drive up to one. You pick one of the lanes out. They are, after all, very similar to one another. Once you get pulled up to one, you immediately are ready to get back on the road. You pull out some spare change pay the fare and as quickly as possible you are on your way.

That, if we are not careful, is how we will treat the church and our faith. After all, no one really likes going to one. But we feel we must if we are not to get corrupted by the world and its dangers. We drive past many every day. Eventually we pick one out. Which one, it doesn't really matter; they are very similar to one another. When we get to one, we very soon are ready to leave again. Perhaps we pull out some spare change to pay the offering and then we are on your way.

These types of misconceptions are what prompt people to distance themselves from their local church. As the Church, we must improve our strategies of discipleship in order that people do feel mutually encouraged by their common faith.

**Q #3: The Church has some many denominations and differences. How can I ever figure out which one is right?**

300 major Christian denominations. Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant. All these major differences, which one is right? Are any of them? Are none of them?

*1 Corinthians 1:10*

*I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.*

*1 Corinthians 11:18-19*

*For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.*

How do distinguish between a denominational difference and a heresy? How can the Church strive for unity despite differences?

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**A: Unity is the goal. Factions are a possibility.**

There is a story told of a Baptist man, and I can tell this joke because I'm Baptist OK, but this man was marooned on an island all alone. Eventually one night a passing ship happened to see his fire burning and so they went over to investigate. They found the man and he had seemed to be doing well for himself. He had built three separate

structures. When the crew asked him what they were, he said, "Well the first one, that's my house. The second one there is my church." "What about the third one?" they asked. The man said, "Well that's where I used to go to church." We cannot even agree with ourselves most of the time. Agreeing with other Christians, especially over heated theological issues, can get messy.

One way Churches can come together is through common *prayer*. The church was always meant to be a place where believers could come together to pray for and with each other (Acts 2:42; Jam. 5:13-14). Prayer within the church can be for salvation and success in ministry (Psa. 118:25). But we shouldn't just pray for those who attend our church. Prayer should be a method of connection between churches. No matter their denomination (2 Cor. 9:14). How powerful our churches in our communities could be if they came together in prayer!

Another way that churches can come together is through generosity and *giving*. No matter a church's denominational preferences, each should be devoted to caring for the poor and downcast, for this is true religion before God (Jam. 1:27). This commonality is what makes the Church the city on a hill, which was God's intention. Prayer and giving show the world that despite differences the Church can unite and work to bring Christ's Kingdom to earth. May we be about such work until He returns again.

### Prayer and Follow Up

- Suggested response to Q#1: To do what we can to commit ourselves to the practice of spiritual discipline. Personally and corporately. This may mean taking the issue to our church leaders or working to develop a small group in our spheres of influence.
- Suggested response to Q#2: Ask God to stir in us a desire to grow in our faith. And to see others grow in theirs. Ask Him to bring opportunities to encourage others in their walk with Him.
- Suggested response to Q#3: Seek out opportunities to pray with those from different church backgrounds. The next time debate arises to strive for unity.